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# INDEPENDENT OR DEMOCRATIC CHURCH GOVERNMENT

THE DIVINELY APPOINTED CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCHES OF  
OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

BEING

"CARSON'S REASONS FOR SEPARATING FROM THE  
GENERAL SYNOD OF ULSTER."

ABRIDGED.

WITH SUCH ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS AS ARE NECESSARY TO ADAPT IT TO  
THE GENERAL QUESTION OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT, AND THE DEVEL-  
OPMENT OF THE ORDER OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCHES.

BY

G. M. SLAYSMAN,  
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

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"HEAR YE HIM."—MATT. XVII. 5.

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*Bertram Smith*  
*Aug. 18, 1933*

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## PREFACE.

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The author of this volume in its present form, has not attempted any thing new or original. Having read "CARSON'S REASONS FOR SEPARATING FROM THE GENERAL SYNOD OF ULSTER," he has been profoundly impressed with their force. Though designed to enforce the Independent form of church government, as scriptural, in opposition to the Presbyterian form, his arguments are equally applicable, and conclusive against every other National or Hierarchical system of church order. With this view he has abridged the work of Dr. Carson, leaving out that part of it which has a local bearing—referring to the Synod of Ulster and the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. He has endeavored to reproduce the arguments of Dr. Carson, using his language when by so doing the issue would not be affected, adding such arguments and suggestions as the present state of the question seemed to demand. As some of the Hierarchies are Presbyterian in their form of government, he has retained the chapter on Ruling or Lay Elders, setting out this peculiar branch of the subject more fully, by quotations from a leading minister and teacher of the Presbyterian Church, and more fully meeting the issue these quotations present. That these arguments might find some support outside of his own denomination, a chapter is added containing Mosheim's description of the apostolic churches, and another, found in the "SUP-

PLEMENT TO THE COMPREHENSIVE COMMENTARY," with the sanction of William Jenks, D.D :—the former from a Lutheran or Hierarchical, the latter from a Congregational or Independent stand-point. In compliance with the expressed wishes of beloved brethren, whose judgments he holds in high estimation, who asked its publication, he has introduced as a closing chapter, a sermon entitled "THE ONLY UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD," rewritten and prepared, as a sequel to the arguments and history which precede it, and designed to give a description of the apostolic churches in their essential characteristics, and also, a view of the peculiarities of the Baptist churches, as the only representatives of the apostolic models.

There are valid objections against publishing Dr. Carson's work, as it is, in this country ; much of it is local, and while its local references were justifiable when it was first published (1805), would not now be applicable even in Ireland. There are no Presbyterian Churches, Ministers, or Synods, now, as to moral character and integrity in what are termed fundamental doctrines, such as Dr. Carson describes ; and to publish a work at this time, chiefly against that denomination, with descriptions applicable half a century ago, but not now applicable, would be manifestly unjust. The only justification of its publication, entire, at the present time, would be to show the legitimate tendency of Infant Baptism, to produce just such a state of things as Carson describes, where there is no counteracting influence—as one of a series, to show that Infant Baptism is the prolific parent of evils whose name is legion.

But it would be criminal to permit the weighty and solid arguments of Dr. Carson, directly applicable to church government, to remain thus longer in obscurity, and inaccessible to the people whose manhood is so completely involved in the question. In the present state



of church agitation, the great question at the bottom of all, is, the MANHOOD OF EVERY CHRISTIAN. Yea, both in church, and state, the great question of the age, is, the MANHOOD OF EVERY MAN ; and every thing that will throw light upon it, and aid the people in reaching just conclusions in reference to their proper position in government, and especially in church government, it is their right to have, and the duty of those who are qualified, to give.

The particular copy of the work used in the preparation of this volume the author received from a son of one who had been a member of the church at Tubermore, Ireland. This son, now nearly three-score and ten years old, was sprinkled in infancy by Dr. Carson, and, it is said, was the last infant he ever sprinkled.\* The high esteem in which he was held by the family is indicated by the fact that this infant was named "Alexander Carson"—after their beloved Pastor.

In the "Memoir of Dr. Carson," we are informed that a party of men, organized for the purpose, came into the meeting-house while he was preaching, and announced their intention of thrusting him from the pulpit: he requested them to wait till he had finished his discourse, assuring them that he would then voluntarily retire. "After the service was concluded, as he descended from the pulpit and was passing out, one of his deacons lifted the Bible from the desk, swung it upon his shoulders, and taking up his march in the rear of his pastor, exclaimed, '*Let all who wish to follow the Bible, come this way.*'" The father of the above-named infant, it is said, was that deacon, and very properly,

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\* A common, but most absurd phraseology ; for it makes Dr. Carson, or any other person in the same connection, to have scattered the infant in particles. Yet the author cannot conscientiously say baptized, and this is his apology for using a phraseology so unphilological, though common and well understood.

was that the last infant upon whom that great and good man sprinkled water in the name of the Holy Trinity. If the Bible was henceforth to be followed, both Dr. Carson and Deacon James McCurdy must forever abandon a practice which is not to be found within its sacred pages. Deacon (afterwards Elder) McCurdy, subsequently emigrated to Pennsylvania, and preached the gospel with considerable success in the lower end of Lancaster and York counties. Quite a number of believers were baptized by him, in a pool of water collected in one of the slate quarries in which he labored. He died A.D. 1826. Six children survived him, three sons and three daughters, who, with their children, many of whom have reached maturity, are among the most respectable and influential families in the community in which they reside.

In the same Memoir, page 30, there is an interesting incident illustrating the character of Dr. Carson's heroic wife. When her father, a wealthy linen bleacher, urged the poverty to which their course exposed them—assured them that their children would starve, and that he would never relieve them if they did not come back to the Presbyterian church—she replied: "Father, God feeds the young ravens when they cry unto him; and I cannot believe that while we are striving to do his will, he will let the young Carsons suffer." Another incident, communicated to the author by this family, illustrating her firm adherence to principle, is worthy of permanent record. When Dr. Carson consulted her concerning the step he was about to take, and the sacrifice it involved, her reply to him was, "Do not gag your mouth nor clog your conscience for money."

The deep-toned piety, strong faith, and firm adherence to principle which characterized Carson, are illustrated by the closing sections of his work. In separating from the Presbyterian Church, there was no other body

in that neighborhood with which he could unite. With his views of truth and duty, he must stand almost alone, with the greater part of the community against him. The objections urged against his course were, therefore, all the more forcible. It was said that by leaving the Synod "he would give up an important station, cowardly desert the field of battle, and in all probability deprive himself forever of an opportunity of preaching the gospel. That Paul had said, 'Woe is me, if I preach not the gospel;' and Christ, that 'The harvest is plentiful, and the laborers few.' That it must, then, be highly improper to leave a ripe harvest without laborers to reap it."

To this he answers: "What is the amount of this objection? It is, 'to do evil that good may come.' If I have shown that such a connection is sinful, no supposed advantages resulting to religion from it should have the smallest weight, because they are nothing in reality. What good could I do in any situation on earth without God's blessing upon my labors? And is it supposable that I am likely to have this blessing, when I refuse to obey him? Before my attention was turned to this subject, when my views were not so clear, God might have partially blessed my labors. But I could no longer look for a blessing, nor, with a good conscience, preach the gospel at all, while conscious that I was not complying with his will. 'I leave an important situation.' What sort of language, in the mouth of a Christian, is that? If I had an opportunity of preaching the gospel in every parish in the island, could I, of myself, call one sinner to repentance? A station is only important as there may be the probability of doing good; and I can see no probability of this, as long as we live in the wilful neglect, or breach of the least part of the known will of God. Ah! friends, I am afraid if we search our hearts to the bottom, the real motive of



remaining in corrupt churches, is rather the importance of it to our own temporal interests, than a concern lest the work of the Lord should stand undone. ‘Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our gain.’ But, ‘I am running as a coward out of the field of battle.’ No, I am only repairing to the standard of my captain, and deserting his enemies. I am only putting myself in a situation in which I can fight without restraint ; and whether I am to be an officer or a private, must be left to my general, who employs every man in the situation that suits him best, and in which he can render the most effectual service. But, ‘Is it not a sin for me to put myself out of a condition to preach the gospel?’ Yes, if I would give up preaching for the most splendid throne in Europe, I would be unworthy of opening my mouth to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation. If I would quit my station for the sake of a little more of the *unrighteous mammon*, I would be inexcusable. If I would quit preaching for fear of man, ‘woe would be upon me.’ But if I quit a station by the command of my general, I am not to blame.”

“But ‘the harvest is great, and the laborers are few.’ True, very true ; and what is the consequence ? Is it, that I must transgress the orders of Christ to reap the harvest ? Is there no way of obeying one command without breaking another ? Put the objection into words, and it will run thus : ‘*O Lord, thou hast a great harvest, and few to reap it. I am an active young laborer, but I cannot serve thee unless thou allowest me to break one of thy commandments. It is but a little one, and it is much better for thee to give me this liberty, than to want my services, for thou canst not do well without me. Thou must either take me on these terms, or thou must lose thy grain !*’ Were I to reason and act thus, the Lord of the harvest could soon lay me aside, and let me see he could have the work done without me. It is for us to do what

is duty, and leave events to God. If he has any work to do at present in Ireland, I am sure I am taking the way to do it. If he has work to do, who is he most likely to employ as his instruments? Will he let me stand idle in the market-place, and employ others to serve him, whose sole object is to serve themselves? If it be my supreme delight to win souls to Christ, I do not think I shall be disappointed. If it be in any measure my meat and drink to do his will, it is not likely he will refuse to give me employment. 'And whatever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.' 'He that loveth me, keepeth my commandments.' 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.' 'Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.' 'And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?' "

"No argument," he continues, "has been more frequently used to reconcile me to the Synod, than 'the duty I owe my family.' 'He that provideth not for his own, especially for those of his own household, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.' I acknowledge the obligation of this scripture, in its fullest extent. But am I obliged to neglect one duty by attending to another? I am to provide for my family; but, will any say, I am to rob and murder to support them? I am to provide, but it is things that are lawful. I am not to support them at the expense of a good conscience. If I cannot trust my family upon God, how will I trust him with my soul? He has not only said, 'He that provideth not, etc.,' but he has also said, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' I must either renounce the sixth chapter of Matthew, or I must do my duty, and trust myself and family to him who feeds the fowls of the air, and clothes the lilies of



the field. He that feeds his enemies, will not suffer his friends to starve. With what conscience could I press others to trust in Providence, when I distrusted him myself? When I read the history of Aristides, the Athenian, and many other Pagan sages, who scorned riches for earthly fame, I am ashamed that the glories of heaven, and the love of Jesus, should have a slighter impression on me. Cyrus was fed on brown bread and cresses, to fit him for a consummate general; and shall I think it a grievance, to submit to that discipline, to enable me more successfully to fight the battles of my Lord? I must 'endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.' Perhaps there never was a general of distinction, who has not undergone more hardships, fatigues, wants, and dangers, to procure temporal glory, than I have any prospect of in my more honorable warfare. 'Now they do it for a corruptible crown, but we for an incorruptible.' A few years hence, and all my wants and sorrows shall be no more. I will be where 'the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.' 'They that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many unto righteousness, as the stars forever and ever.'

“ ‘And must I part with all I have,  
My dearest Lord, for thee?  
It is but right, since thou hast done  
Much more than this for me.

‘Yes, let it go; one look from thee,  
Will more than make amends  
For all the losses I sustain,  
Of honor, riches, friends.

‘Ten thousand worlds, ten thousand lives,  
How worthless they appear,  
Compared with thee, supremely good,  
Divinely bright and fair!

‘Saviour of souls! could I from thee  
A single smile obtain,  
Though destitute of all things else,  
I’d glory in my gain.’”

May all who read this volume, possess the spirit illustrated by the foregoing quotations.

G. M. S.

YORK, MAY 21, 1868.



## INTRODUCTION.

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A BRIEF VIEW OF EXISTING CHURCH GOVERNMENTS.

CHURCH GOVERNMENTS are divided into two classes: HIERARCHICAL, and INDEPENDENT.

The HIERARCHICAL, embraces the following bodies :—THE GREEK CHURCH, THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH, THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, THE LUTHERAN CHURCH, THE GERMAN REFORMED CHURCH, THE DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH, THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH, THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, THE METHODIST PROTESTANT CHURCH, THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, THE MORAVIAN CHURCH, THE EVANGELICAL ASSOCIATION, THE CHURCH OF GOD, (*Winebrennerians*), THE UNITED BRETHERN CHURCH. Each of these bodies or churches, is itself a Hierarchy, and differs, in some respects, from all the others. The same general principle, distinguishes all of them :—THE POWER OR GOVERNMENT IS IN THE OFFICERS OF THE BODY; and is exercised by a Pope, a Patriarch, an Emperor, King, or Queen ;

a General Council, Convention, Conference, or Synod; a Classis, a Presbytery, a Conference, a Synod, or an Eldership; in the local congregation—which is but a part of the whole body—by a Vestry, a Session, a Consistory, a Church Council, or a Quarterly Conference.

The INDEPENDENT, includes the BAPTIST, and the CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES. The principle which distinguishes this class may be expressed as follows:—TO THE PEOPLE, THE MEMBERSHIP, WHICH CONSTITUTE EACH LOCAL CHURCH, BELONGS ALL THE POWER THE LORD JESUS CHRIST HAS COMMITTED TO HIS PEOPLE, AND IS ALWAYS LIMITED TO THE PARTICULAR BODY WITH WHICH THEY ARE CONNECTED. The Lord Jesus Christ is their only Head. “HEAD OVER ALL.” The rights, duties and powers of each member, and of each local church, being inalienable, they have no earthly ruler or head, no General Councils, Conventions, Assemblies, Conferences, Synods, or other Legislative, Judicial, or Executive bodies, to which their rights, duties, or powers are, or may be delegated.

In observing the great difference between these two classes, and the peculiar, and sometimes important, difference between the several Hierarchical bodies, we are ready to ask: Do all these churches find their peculiar forms of church government in



the New Testament? Have they all, thus different and often antagonistic, the Divine Sanction? Or, as some teach, is there no form of Church Government prescribed in the Scriptures? Has the all-wise God left his people, his "ecclesia," without a government, allowing each body or people to make, or adopt such a form, as may accord with their notions of what is necessary or expedient?

The author, in common with those who hold the principles which distinguish the INDEPENDENT CHURCHES, believes that the Lord Jesus Christ has prescribed a government for his churches, complete in all its parts; and that the New Testament reveals what that government is; that it is INDEPENDENT, and not HIERARCHICAL; and to a patient examination of the evidence which sustains these propositions, he would invite the reader's prayerful and candid attention.



## CHAPTER I.

### REASONS WHY WE MAY EXPECT TO FIND SOME FORM OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

WE are not arrogantly to prescribe to God what he must reveal; our conclusions upon what is proper to be revealed, must be determined by a candid inspection of the sacred volume itself. It is not uncommon for persons to decide in favor of a particular church, or doctrine, or duty, or Church Government, without an investigation of the Scriptures. When they open the sacred volume, it is not to carefully and candidly examine what it teaches, but expecting and determined to find therein their own favorite system. We are not warranted to conclude with certainty that there is a model of Church Government in the New Testament, till we prove it from itself, yet there are reasons which render it probable, which, when considered, will animate us in our search, induce us to collect the evidence, and prepare us to receive with gratitude, the pattern the Scriptures afford, even though it may be scanty. It would seem that there is an evident necessity for scriptural direction on this subject. There are strong antecedent reasons to expect that the New Testament will contain the model of the Apostolic churches for our direction.

## 1. INFLUENCE OF GOVERNMENT ON CHARACTER.

Human manners are much affected by the differences of civil governments. The genius of the constitution gives a turn to general manners and modes of thinking. Nations have their characteristic habits and modes of thought, which the philosopher can trace to this source. That the same influence is exerted by different forms of Church Government is unquestionable. This influence may not be discernible in a comparison of two individual Christians trained under different systems of Church Government, but will be easily seen when the members under the different forms are compared in a mass. The government that is most spiritual will unavoidably communicate a tincture of its spirit to the mass of its subjects. Now if the form of Church Government be, in the smallest degree, influential of human conduct and character, it is not to be conceived that our Lord would leave it entirely to human discretion.

## 2. THEORIES INFLUENCE THEIR ADVOCATES.

The different theories which have been adopted on the subject of Church Government have materially influenced the sentiments of their respective advocates, not only in the explanation of passages of Scripture immediately applicable, but also of many in which they are not under the influence of a party spirit. All scripture truths have a mutual connection, and it will often, inevitably, happen, that adopting a wrong theory on one point, will lead to other mistakes in the interpretation of the

Scriptures, or hide from us the true analysis. If, therefore, a difference of opinion on this subject affects the explanation of other passages of Scripture, there is, besides its own importance, an additional reason, why God should interpose for our direction.

### 3. THE GENERAL SENSE OF PROFESSING CHRISTIANS.

The general sense of professing Christians in all ages, argues the necessity of scriptural direction on this point. This argument is used with success, in favor of revelation, and there is no reason why it should not have its full weight here. The mass of professing Christians have, in all ages, supposed that they have found, at least, the groundwork of their respective plans in the Scriptures (when was the divine right given up?). Is not the same moral sense of the mass of professing Christians still satisfied that the groundwork of their respective systems is in the sacred volume? This, therefore, is another reason why we may expect divine revelation to settle the questions at issue.

### 4. UNANIMITY REQUIRED.

Either unanimity on this point is not a duty, or the New Testament must afford us the means of effecting it. The prayer of Jesus (John xvii. 21-23) for the oneness of his disciples, sufficiently indicates the duty of unanimity in all things, among his people. We may say that perfect unanimity is not to be expected in this world. But this is not the fault of revelation, but of our re-



maintaining corruptions and blindness. There can be nothing a duty that is not revealed. Our differences in the minutest things of religion are owing to ourselves, and not to a want of Scripture direction. We cannot reach this so plainly required unanimity, but by proposing self-evident truths, or the authority of God in revelation. That the form of Church Government does not belong to self-evident truths, is sufficiently evident from experience; it must, therefore, be a subject of revelation. But unanimity on this point is, consequently, of more importance than on many others, of more intrinsic importance. On many other points, if Christians have differences of opinion, they have them to themselves; on this, their differences affect each other. One must submit to be ruled by the opinion of his neighbor, by a Church Government he thinks Christ did not appoint, or his neighbor must submit to him; or they must form different sects, which is evidently contrary to divine authority. To secure this unanimity, and prevent the evil effects of division, on a point in which our differences affect each other, we may reasonably expect divine direction.

##### 5. HOW MAY UNANIMITY BE EFFECTED?

Will there ever be a day when all sects shall coalesce? We cannot doubt this. Without it we cannot have that perfect harmony the Scriptures, with the general consent of professing Christians, give us reason to expect. Discrepancy on this point is too great to be consistent with the



“increase of knowledge” of the “latter days.” But is this to be effected by a new revelation, or by a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit upon Christians, and greater attention to the will of God as now revealed? Is there any other way in which revelation can effect this union, but by giving us a model or direction on this point? It is not supposable that the want of a model or direction on this point in the Scriptures, would be the means of uniting all Christians. For if there be no model or direction in the Scriptures, unanimity or uniformity is not a duty. This would be saying that the opinion, that union is not a duty, would effect union. Never would there be greater variety, than when this notion should prevail. To effect union on this supposition, it would seem necessary to enlarge the powers of the mind beyond what has ever appeared in man. The sublimest geniuses on earth have their differences of opinion on every thing but self-evident truths. But to effect union in this manner, is derogatory both to revelation and the office of the Holy Spirit. There must, therefore, be a model and direction, and we may expect to find it in the New Testament.

#### 6. HOW ENFORCE OBEDIENCE TO CHURCH RULERS?

There cannot be that prompt, cheerful, and dutiful obedience to church rulers, if the model and laws of a church be not in the New Testament. If church rulers have discretionary power to enact or execute laws, they may abuse that power, and therefore their decrees must be received with examina-

tion and caution. Thus, there will be a difference of opinion with regard to their propriety ; and, at all events, the conviction of the duty of obedience will be more slowly and circuitously obtained. This will gradually introduce either a spirit of disobedience, or of abject servility among church members. They will be led, either to slight the authority of church judicatories, or receive their dictates with slavish submission. They will be either the slaves or dupes of church rulers, receiving the decrees of ecclesiastical assemblies as the dictates of heaven : or they will make light of their authority, and despise it. Complete, unequivocal, cheerful, and conscientious obedience, is to be found only among those who dare not command without opening their commission, and appealing to the laws, to which they enforce obedience. Here, there is no room, either for disobedience, on the one hand, or slavish submission, on the other. Church members, when the model and laws of a church are in the New Testament, see clearly whether they are obeying God or man. Divine direction is therefore necessary.

#### 7. HOW AVOID CONFUSION ?

Either all forms of Church Government are alike calculated to promote edification, or, if one be better than another, that which is best will be so evident, that all Christians will readily agree in it, or the New Testament must afford us sufficient means to discover it ; otherwise it is deficient. No one will believe that all forms are alike calculated to pro-

mote edification, nor can any one believe the New Testament to be deficient. In the same times, in the same city, we find almost all varieties of Church Government, that have existed in times and countries most remote. Now, if it be a matter of importance to adopt one form rather than another, and if the children of the same family, as well as the inhabitants of the same city, will differ in their views on this subject, it would appear to be a matter worthy of divine interference. If there be no divine model or direction, is not God to blame for all the variety of sects, occasioned by this difference of sentiment? If we are left to our own judgment and prudence, there can be no sin in using them: and a variety of sects is the unavoidable consequence. We may expect, therefore, divine direction, in order to avoid difference and confusion.

#### 8. IMPORTANCE OF DETERMINING CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

Whatever is left to human discretion in religion, is of such a nature, that there is no room for the weakest Christian to err, nor the least foundation to dispute; nor would the smallest advantage have accrued to the people of God, by having those things determined, which are left undefined; but, on the contrary, such a determination would have been attended with inconveniences. Such, for instance, are the times for meeting for public worship on the Lord's day, the order of the services, etc. Who ever complained that these were not



confined? Would it have been of any advantage to Christians, that Christ had appointed certain hours for public worship? Nay, would not this have been attended with many inconveniences? But it is quite otherwise with Church Government. The determination of this would have been attended with no inconvenience, but with many important advantages. The leaving of it undetermined would give unavoidable occasion to dissension and schism, and thus, instead of being the author of order in the churches, God would be "the author of confusion." We may expect, therefore, to find a divine model in the New Testament.

#### 9. LEGISLATION REQUIRES WISDOM.

Civil government and legislation require the highest exertion of human genius, and the greatest men who have written on the subject, are by no means agreed, even in theory, what is the form best calculated to promote the happiness of mankind. Church Government is not less important or difficult than civil government. Yea, Church Government is as much more difficult as the government of the mind is more difficult than that of the body, and as much more important, as spiritual is greater than temporal happiness. Is it, then, supposable, that our Lord would leave a matter of such importance to the discretion of man? Besides, the disciples of Christ, upon whom this duty would devolve, are the unfittest imaginable for such business. They are generally the "weak things of this world." Moreover, it is evident that every

form of Church Government, which man might attempt to make, would be on the model of the most approved form of civil governments. A Christian, then, to be a legislator in a church, must have the qualifications of a civil legislator. But the great mass of Christians are destitute of these qualifications. They must, then, either yield to be led implicitly by the few learned among them, or be liable to great mistakes. Divine legislation is therefore necessary, and we may expect to find it in the New Testament.

#### 10. A VITAL QUESTION.

There is not another question in religion, about which so much human blood has been shed, or on account of which the earth has been filled with so much confusion, as this very question: Does not this argue the necessity of a Divine model, that God may be vindicated, and the blame be wholly attachable to man?

#### 11. ANTI-CHRIST UNAVOIDABLE.

If no model be given, it would be impossible to prevent ambitious men from imposing on the simplicity of the multitude, and promoting schemes for their own aggrandizement, under the specious cover of zeal for religion. Such men as Diotrephes would always assume the pre-eminence. Anti-Christ would, on this supposition, have some apology. Nay, in such a case, some sort of Anti-Christ is unavoidable; and it does not affect the question whether he is one man, or several hundred.



Therefore, to leave the Christians of the first age without excuse, that men may be clearly chargeable with the guilt of rearing and nurturing that monster, it was necessary that a Divine model should have been given, from which the smallest deviation was sinful.

12. EVERY MAN'S MANHOOD MUST BE RECOGNIZED.

There must be a Divine model of Church Government in order that the manhood of every Christian be established and maintained. If one Christian submits to the government of another, without Divine command, he thereby surrenders his manhood. If one Christian is to be governed and ruled by another, there must be Divine direction, showing who shall govern, and who shall submit. Recognizing the manhood of every man, who, without Divine authority, may assume the prerogative of governing in matters of religion? If there be, therefore, a governing power among the people of God, it must be by Divine authority, and we may expect to find it in the New Testament.

## CHAPTER II.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THAT FORM WE ARE WARRANTED TO EXPECT?

## 1. THE MOST PRACTICABLE.

THAT form of Church Government which is practicable in all countries, ages, and circumstances, is more likely to be the New Testament model, than one that is not. Now there is no country, age, or circumstance, in which the Independent form is not practicable; but to make the Hierarchical practicable, there must be several congregations formed in a particular district. If there were but a single congregation in a nation, the Independent form would not be affected; and if every individual of a nation were a Christian, it is equally adequate.\* Some forms of the Hierarchical governments are better suited to one form of civil government, than others. The Independent is equally suited to all forms of civil government, and being prac-

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\* Jesus recognizes but "two or three gathered together in his name," as a church having the Divine sanction. (Matt. xviii: 20.) In such a church the Hierarchical government is impossible, even in the lowest degree, as that of "ruling elders" of the Independent Presbyterian. There must be male members enough to form "a bench of ruling elders," and others beside, to make even this *insignificant* Hierarchy possible. A church so small can only be a Democracy, an Independent Democracy.

licable in all countries, ages, and circumstances, is most likely to be the New Testament model.

2. THAT FORM WHICH IS CAPABLE OF LEAST ABUSE.

That form of Church Government which is capable of the least abuse is most likely to be Divine. This is unquestionably the Independent. If a single church on this plan degenerates, becomes erroneous or indifferent, it has no direct power to injure others, or draw them into errors. But it is quite contrary with a Hierarchy. When one congregation degenerates, falls into error, as part of the whole body, in proportion to its standing and importance, it has an influence on all the rest; and when such become the more numerous, their power to corrupt the more pure is increased. On the other hand, in a period of general lukewarmness or apostasy, if an Independent church be impressed with the duty of reformation, there is nothing in their connection with other churches to clog, or prevent a reformation. But a congregation, which is part of a Hierarchy, in such a situation, would find the whole weight of the connection hanging upon them, and it would be impossible for them to succeed without bringing the majority of the whole body to their mind, or by separation. It is supposed that by having some kind of a ruling body as a Synod, Conference, or such like, error may be kept from creeping into congregations, and union be promoted, by the power the majority has over the minority. But how should one man, or one body, keep another

from error? By compulsion, or persuasion? There is no lawful means for one body to keep another from error, but by remonstrance, and exhortation. No other method can be successful; if this fails, pains, penalties, imprisonments, confiscations, and death, would be useless. Force may make hypocrites, but never will make consistent, truth-loving Christians. A law of the General Assembly, or Conference, or Synod, may prevent a man from preaching error on some particular points of doctrine; but can it enable him to preach "the truth as it is in Jesus?" Will it enable "the blind to lead the blind, without both falling into the ditch?" Where is the great difference between poisoning the sheep, and starving them? Let the history of the Hierarchies vouch their utility and efficiency in restraining error, and preserving vital religion and union, even in their own bounds! Let their history in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and every part of Europe, give testimony to their restraining and preserving influence! Let the names on everybody's lips—"High Church" and "Low Church," "Old School" and "New School," "Church North" and "Church South," "Ritualist" and "Anti-Ritualist," "Symbolist" and "Anti-Symbolist,"—tell their preserving, restraining, and union-promoting influence, even in our own free land! Their history will show, that, in proportion to the entireness of their sway or dominion, that for a time, they may preserve orthodoxy in the letter, but midnight darkness may reign with an orthodox creed, to be followed, ultimately, by every form of error and



corruption. While, on the other hand, the history of the Independent churches, as they existed from the times of the Apostles to the 16th century, under the names of Novatians or Cathari, Donatists, Paulicians, Henricians, Petrobrussians, Arnoldists, Albigenses, Waldenses, Mennonites or Anabaptists, and Welsh Baptists,—“*Witnesses for the truth*,”—shows, as pertains to the great majority of them, a purity of life, and an uncorruptedness of doctrine, which even their enemies have not been able to impeach. Now, all the means of remonstrance, persuasion, exhortation, and entreaty, are equally open to the Independent churches to preserve each other from backsliding and error. A church of this order may reform other churches, but can receive no injury from them. A congregation in a Hierarchy may be injured by its connection, if others are corrupt, but cannot reform them in any other way than what is practicable by an Independent church. The conclusion, therefore, is inevitable, that, as this form of government has all the advantages, without any of the disadvantages, of the Hierarchical, it is more likely to be the New Testament plan.

### 3. THAT FORM WHICH IS SUFFICIENT.

It is a maxim of philosophy, as well as in theology, that God does nothing in vain. According to this, if all the ends of Church Government can be obtained in an Independent church, all foreign interference is useless, and cannot be God's appointment. That a church under this form of govern-



ment, can subsist in vigor, is evident from experience ; and that it is capable of exerting all necessary influence in preserving others from error, is also evident ; what possible advantage, then, can be gained by a numerous subordination of higher human authorities ? If a light hat of fur be sufficient to preserve the head from the weather, why cover it with a millstone ?

#### 4. THAT FORM WHICH DOES NOT NEED HUMAN EXPEDIENTS.

That form of Church Government which cannot preserve uniformity and purity of doctrine without human expedients, is not so likely to be the New Testament model, as that which can attain and preserve the highest possible degree of vital religion, as well as uniformity and purity of doctrine, without admitting, in any instance, the devices of human wisdom. Now, the advocates of the Hierarchical form of government claim, that it is impossible to preserve uniformity of opinion among them, without some general authoritative formula, or confession, or articles of faith, to be publicly recognized by their membership. There is no such formula or confession of faith in the Scriptures. That constitution that requires one to maintain purity is not likely to be of God.

#### 5. THAT FORM WHICH REQUIRES MOST KNOWLEDGE OF THE SCRIPTURES.

That form of Church Government that leads most

to the Scriptures, and requires in church members the most intimate acquaintance with them, is most likely to be the form prescribed by the New Testament. Without acquaintance with the Divine oracles, the members of an Independent church cannot advance a single step in church affairs. A knowledge of the Scriptures is absolutely necessary to them, arising from the constitution of their churches. The Bible is their code of laws; they have no other authoritative confession of faith, or book of discipline, and it must, in order to their instruction in their church business, and duties, be always before them. In the Hierarchical churches, submitting every thing to their rulers, and authoritative bodies, the mass of their membership need know but little about the Scriptures. Hence, alas! the "Roman Catholic layman" is deprived of the precious volume altogether. The church rulers need, as their chief qualifications, a knowledge of established forms, ancient usages, ecclesiastical canons, books of discipline, and confessions of faith; and these, of necessity, must be chiefly consulted. The Independent form, requiring constant study of the Scriptures, is most likely to be the form found in the New Testament.

6. THAT FORM WHICH MOST CONSTANTLY NEEDS  
THE DIVINE PRESENCE.

That form of Church Government which needs most the presence of God and prayer, is most likely to be the Divine model. As the membership in an Independent church need to be in constant com-

munion with the Scriptures, and learning there the duty of unanimity in all things, when, by their feeble judgment, they are unable to decide, their only resource is prayer for Divine direction. The mass of their membership are not the learned, but "the weak things of the world," and therefore require, constantly, Divine aid; so that, if there be one member of a different mind from the rest, the promised presence and interposition of Jesus is their only refuge, and prayer their only remedy. They have no other judicatory. They must appeal to God, and await his direction. A system which thus inevitably recognizes the Divine prerogative, and leads its adherents constantly to him for direction, we may expect to find in the New Testament.

#### 7. THAT FORM WHICH IS MOST FAVORABLE TO SOUL-LIBERTY.

That form of Church Government which recognizes most fully the manhood of every man, which is most favorable to liberty of conscience, and in which the individual experiences the least undue influence in determining his principles and conduct in religious matters, is most likely to be the New Testament model. The Scriptures are the only rule of faith and practice, and every man is bound to judge of them, and determine their meaning for himself. He may use helps to understand them: but if he understands them differently from others, he is bound to act on his own belief, rather than that of another. No other churches recognize the manhood of every member, and in no other churches

is this liberty so completely enjoyed, as in the Independent churches. True, in some of the Hierarchies, individuals may enjoy all the liberty they desire ; but does this result from the nature of their constitution, or, from the indulgence or indifference of those connected with them ? The leading principle of the Hierarchical system, that for which it is most prized by its greatest admirers, is the power of regulating principles and conduct in matters of religion. If this power be taken away, what end does it serve ? And should the authoritative body meet, without this power, it would be but a meeting of officers "in general or annual convocation," for council and advice. Where has there been such a meeting, such a convocation of the officers or delegates of a Hierarchy, that acted solely on the principle of council and advice ? There are Hierarchical connections, in which individuals may be Calvinists or Arminians, believe the canon of Scripture, or set aside part of it, believe in baptismal regeneration, or reject it, and disagree in reference to other important doctrines and church rites and ceremonies ; but this can only be the result of connivance in the general authoritative body. Whenever the ruling body chooses to claim its right, a majority may compel an individual to embrace every peculiarity of their creed, and direct and circumscribe his labors as they please. Is not every member amenable to their bar, if he transgress any law of theirs, although he may judge them contrary to the laws of Christ ? Does he have the privilege, while under their jurisdiction, of thinking and acting for himself, in all



religious matters? To be consistent he must submit. Then, though there may be more liberty of conscience in some of the Hierarchies than others of the same order, as the power of compulsion is inherent in their constitution, involving, to a greater or less degree, the surrender of the manhood of the membership thereof, that form cannot be the one most likely to be found in the New Testament.

As a matter of fact, Independent Church Government, gave birth to the best form of Civil Government. Thomas Jefferson learned his ideas of the principles of Civil Government, from a little Independent (Baptist) church, in the neighborhood in which he lived, whose business meetings he was in the habit of attending. The principle which underlies the whole structure of the Government of the United States of America, and each State, viz., that all power is inherent in the people, that the officers of the Government are of the people, chosen by the people, not to rule over them, but to serve them, and promote their interests and welfare, is the very centre and soul of Independent Church Government. In all the history of the Hierarchies, where have any of them given civil liberty to any part of the world? Is it not true, that where the Hierarchy is most potent, there the Government of the State is most despotic; and in proportion as the power of the Hierarchy has been modified and limited, the Civil Government is free?

Independency gave birth to Religious Liberty. Roger Williams, an Independent minister, first, in all the history of human governments, proclaimed



and established the entire separation of Church and State, and the absolute freedom of the worshipper, from the control of the State. Says Bancroft, (in his great History of the United States,) concerning Roger Williams: "He was a Puritan, and a fugitive from English persecution, \* \* \* and he, and he alone, had arrived at the great principle which is its sole effectual remedy. He announced his discovery under the simple proposition of the sanctity of conscience. The civil magistrate should restrain crime, but never control opinion; should punish guilt, but never violate the freedom of the soul. \* \* \* At a time when Germany was the battlefield of all Europe, in the implacable wars of religion, when even Holland was bleeding with the anger of vengeful factions, when France was still to go through the fearful struggle with bigotry, when England was gasping under the despotism of intolerance, more than forty years before William Penn became an American proprietary, Roger Williams asserted the great doctrine of intellectual liberty. It became his glory to found a State upon that principle. \* \* \* \* He was the first person in modern Christendom to assert in its plenitude the doctrine of the liberty of conscience, the equality of opinions before the law," etc.

From this beginning, in the State of Rhode Island, religious liberty has gradually spread over our whole country, being incorporated into the constitution of every State. In Virginia the struggle was long and hard. Dr. Hawks, in his history of the Protestant Episcopal church of Virginia,

says: "The Baptists were the principal promoters of this work, and, in truth, aided more than any other denomination in its accomplishment." Moreover the Baptists, ever on the alert, not satisfied with the Constitution of the Federal Union, urged, and procured the adoption of the amendment, relating to religious liberty, which is now the supreme law of the land. Where, we may ask again, in all the history of the Hierarchies, have they given religious liberty to any part of our earth. Is it not true, that where the Hierarchy is most potent, religious liberty is not enjoyed; and in proportion as the power of the Hierarchy is modified or limited, religious liberty is enjoyed? From them, as shown by their history—and they have a history—not a single ray, of either civil or religious liberty, has fallen upon the pathway of any of our race. If, therefore, civil and religious liberty be of God, Hierarchy, which has ever been antagonistic to them, cannot be of God, and is not likely to be found in the New Testament.

8. THAT FORM WHICH HAS FEWEST INCITEMENTS  
TO UNHALLOWED AMBITION.

Nothing is more universally felt in the human heart than ambition. Nothing our Lord found more difficult to repress, in His immediate followers. That form of Church Government, then, which affords fewest incitements to ambition, is likely to be the model our Lord would set forth. Of all churches, the Independent will stand foremost in this. They afford no opportunities for the exercise

of a worldly ambition. Where the fundamental principle is EQUALITY OF ALL, BEFORE THE LAW OF CHRIST, there can be no incitement to unhallowed ambition. Some of the Hierarchies have fought for and obtained temporal power and riches, and when they held the sword, it was more like Mahomet of Mecca, than Jesus of Nazareth. Gradation in office and power belongs intrinsically to the Hierarchical form of Church Government. This promotes ambition, and cannot, therefore, be the Divine order.

#### 9. THAT FORM WHOSE HYPOTHESES ARE UNIFORM.

If there be any particular model of Church Government in the New Testament, it is probable that the enlightened advocates of it would rest their cause on the same foundation, however various their arguments. For, if several intelligent men embrace the same model, and have the same means of information, they have every inducement to unanimity; and, if disinterested and unprejudiced, are likely to defend it on the same general ground. If they take different and opposite hypotheses to serve as groundwork for their superstructure, they are not likely to have had a common ground in the Scriptures. Now, the advocates of Hierarchy take quite different grounds to rest it on. Some defend the whole system as Divine. Others find only the skeleton of it in the word of God. Others defend it as a lawful human system, on the ground that no particular form of Church Government is prescribed (as they teach) in the New Testament. Some find three orders in the Christian Ministry, others but one or



a parity of all, or, at most, two. No two of the Hierarchies are alike. They differ in important particulars, as much as the political governments of the world. The rational inference to be drawn from this diversity is, that they have no common source from which to draw their ideas. If they all saw the same picture in the word of God, surely they would not give so many different and contradictory accounts of it, when it is their interest to agree. If the Presbyterian form of Church Government had been in the Scriptures, Dr. George Campbell, of Aberdeen, was fully equal to the task of defending it; yet he gives up its Divine right, and proves beyond contradiction, that the apostolic churches were Independent. Archbishop Whately, of all men, could defend the Divine right of Episcopacy; but he, too, in his picture of a church on an island, yields the claim to Independency. So, also, Drs. John Lawrence Mosheim and Samuel Schmucker, of the Lutheran church, who find only Independent churches in the times of the Apostles. These distinguished men, and others we might name, if the Hierarchical form of Church Government was in the New Testament, could find it, and defend it against all opposers. The conclusion is inevitable. Hierarchical Church Government is not in the New Testament.

10. THAT FORM WHICH IS BEST ADAPTED TO PROMOTE THE WELFARE OF ITS ADHERENTS.

The ends of Church Government and church meetings of every kind, must be, chiefly, the edifi-

cation and growth of the members, and the promotion of brotherly love. That form of government which is best calculated to promote these ends, is most likely to have been instituted by Christ. The legitimate workings of the two systems may be seen in their history, as for centuries they existed, in direct antagonism, in Europe. The history of the Hierarchies has been written, and what a frightful and appalling picture it presents! How appropriately are the ten centuries preceding the sixteenth, as pertains to the Hierarchies of Greece and Rome, named "THE DARK AGES!" The history of the churches of the Independent order of government is not yet fully written, and if ever written at all, many of its lines must be traced in blood—freely poured out by the best of men, whose lives were cheerfully given for the pure, unadulterated word of God, "the faith once delivered to the saints." The few pages of their history which have come down to us, are like oases in a desert; and, like the "Star of Bethlehem," shining o'er Judea's dark plains, pointing the wise men to the Redeemer's lowly bed, they point the reader to a people, "whose origin is hid in the remote depths of antiquity,"\* who are the true representatives of gospel simplicity and purity. Jones says of the Paulicians, under which name they were at one period known: "Their leading idea was to restore the profession of Christianity to its primitive simplicity."† Gibbon says: "The Paulician teachers were distinguished by their

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\* Moshier, vol. iv., pp. 424-428. † Jones's Ch. Hist., pp. 237-240.



scriptural names—by the modest title of their fellow pilgrims—the austerity of their lives—and the credit of some extraordinary gift of the Holy Spirit; but they were incapable of desiring, at least of obtaining, the wealth and honors of the Catholic Prelacy. Such anti-christian conduct they strongly condemned.”\* Mosheim most clearly shows that they had more correct ideas of religion and church order, than the dominant churches (Greek and Romish) of that period, and were persecuted more on account of their dislike to images, and opposition to the Hierarchies, than for their other religious opinions. He says: “It may be observed, in the first place, that the Mennonites are not entirely mistaken when they boast of their descent from the Waldenses, Petrobrussians, and other ancient sects, who are usually considered *witnesses of the truth*, in times of universal darkness and superstition. Before the rise of Luther and Calvin, there lay concealed in almost all the countries of *Europe*, particularly in *Bohemia, Moravia, Switzerland, and Germany*, many persons who adhered tenaciously to the following doctrine, which the Waldenses, Wickliffites, and Hussites had maintained, some in a more dignified, and others in a more open and public manner, viz: *That the kingdom of Christ, or the visible church he had established on earth, was an assembly of true and real saints, and ought therefore to be inaccessible to the wicked and unrighteous, and also exempt from all those institutions which*

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\* Gibbon's Rome, vol. v., p. 389.

- *human prudence suggests.*”\* Concerning them, Rienerius Saccho, a Roman Catholic Inquisitor, and most bitter enemy, deliberately makes the following declaration: “Among all the sects, which still are or have been, there is not one more pernicious than that of the Leonists, (a name given to the Waldenses,) and that for several reasons: 1st. Because it is the oldest; for some say it hath existed from the time of Pope Sylvester, (4th cent.,) others from the time of the Apostles. The 2d. Because it is more general; for there is scarce any country where this sect is not. And 3d. Because, when all other sects beget horror by their blasphemies against God, this, the Leonists, hath a great show of piety, because they live justly before men, and believe all things concerning God, and all the articles contained in the creed, only, they blaspheme the church of Rome.” He says further: “They may be known by their manner, and their words; for in their manner they are composed and modest—they show no pride in their garb, being neither costly nor sordid. They avoid merchandize and trade for fear of lies, oaths, and cozenage, but live only by their handicraft: and even their teachers are artificers. They heap not up riches, but are content with necessaries, and these Leonists are singularly chaste, whereas all others but they, are incestuous. They are also temperate in their eating and drinking. They frequent not taverns, neither dancings, nor other vanities. They refrain from anger, and

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\* Mosh., vol. iv., p. 428. (McClaine's Trans.)

are always at work, and both learn and teach one another. They are also to be known by their speech, in which they are wary and modest, and take special care to abstain from scurrility and detraction, from levity of expression, and lying, and swearing."\* Looking at this picture, and comparing it with the well known history of darkness, and ignorance, and superstition; of usurpation, and tyranny, and oppression, priest-craft, and cruel persecution; of debauchery, and licentiousness, and deep moral degradation, which characterized the Greek and Romish Hierarchies during all this period, and to this day characterize them where their power is not limited, or modified—will any one say the genius of their constitution had nothing to do in producing this vast difference? The conclusion is inevitable, the simple, Independent form of Church Government is best adapted to promote the welfare of its adherents, and is, therefore, the form most likely to be found in the New Testament.

11. THAT FORM WHICH MOST NEARLY RESEMBLES THE  
SIMPLICITY OF OTHER GOSPEL INSTITUTIONS.

Christ's institutions father themselves. If a child be lost, and after many years, several pretenders come to the father, and there be not sufficient evidence from testimony, to determine between them, would it not be proper to look for a resemblance to the parents and their other children,

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\* Rien. Saccho, contra Wald., Baird's Hist. of the Wald., pp. 276-279



either in bodily appearance, temper, or genius? If a striking resemblance is found in any one of them, it will be instantly concluded that he *fathers himself*. In the same manner it is reasonable to expect a family likeness in all the ordinances and works of God. Let us then apply this rule in ascertaining the Divine legitimacy of the form of Church Government. Christ has such a child, and while hid in the wilderness, a vile imposture has been imposed on the world during all the dark ages of the reign of Anti-Christ. Since the time when this child came forth from his hiding place, in the sixteenth century, others have laid claim to the honor of heavenly birth. It may be highly serviceable, in judging of their claims, to compare the features, mien, temper, and genius of each, with those of the Father and his other undoubted children. God's wisdom is foolishness to the world, and the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God. Whatever then be the Divine form of Church Government, it is evident that it must be one which would not be suggested by human prudence or policy, that it may appear to be of God, analogous to his procedure in other instances, and having a necessity for his presence and guidance. It must be one which would appear defective, and inadequate in the estimation of the wisdom of this world that God may have the glory of upholding it himself. This is exactly the manner of the Divine procedure in every instance. The wisdom of the world expected Christ to have appeared in far different and opposite circumstances, and to



have acted in quite a contrary manner, in erecting and establishing his kingdom; but the Divine wisdom appears in this, that the Almighty power of God is manifested in accomplishing what had evidently no other support. As the Gospel was first propagated by means the most unlikely to succeed, in themselves the most inadequate; to show that the unseen hand of God upheld and spread it, and that the Divine procedure be consistent, it is necessary that the government be seen to rest solely on IMMANUEL'S SHOULDERS. As he was introduced and inaugurated, and his kingdom set up in a manner directly the reverse of human prudence and policy, so also is it probable he will govern it. To conduct the government of his kingdom on any of the plans of human government, by measures and assemblies formed after a worldly model, would be inconsistent with the whole conduct and procedure of Jesus, Now if there be any justice in this reasoning, a very child may apply it to the point in hand. It may be said truthfully of the government of every Hierarchy in existence, that it is entirely a political institution, either an absolute or limited monarchy, or republic, with its self-appointed or elevated and perpetuated, or its delegated, earthly head, or rulers; its executive, legislative, and judicial powers; its representation in ecclesiastical assemblies; subordination of courts, right of appeal, forms and etiquette of business, canons, digests of laws and decisions, etc., etc.; all borrowed from the world. On the contrary, the Independent form, like Christ himself, has never approved itself to the

wisdom of this world. Nay, the only argument that can plausibly be urged against it, is, its insufficiency for any other than primitive times. In no civil government in the world are its distinguishing features to be found. It could not govern a private family of unregenerate men. We call it a Democracy, a government of the people; it is rather a Christocracy; Christ alone governs. There is not a law or regulation left to the wisdom of man. What civil government ever existed in which the unanimous consent of every member was necessary in any instance? Human affairs could never be conducted in this manner, nor could a body of unconverted men in a church, succeed in its government, in this way. Nothing but the unseen, almighty power of God, could have protected and propagated the Gospel in the circumstances of its appearance; nothing but the presence of Jesus according to his promise, (Matt. xxviii: 19, 20,) could make the machinery of Independent Church Government effect its end. If then, a likeness to God, and an analogy to his procedure in other instances be any token of childship, Independency, and not Hierarchy, is the lawful heir.

But let us pursue the comparison further. In all New Testament institutions, there is a remarkable simplicity. In the Hierarchies there is the most complicated machinery that could possibly be invented; a tedious, roundabout, "*red tape*" way of settling differences, and transacting church business. Several hundred men, more or less, from distant parts of a province, kingdom, state, or nation, meeting at

stated periods, besides all their subordinate meetings, bears no resemblance to the simplicity of other Gospel institutions. When united to those, it is like a plain dressed gentleman, with a huge military hat and feather; or like a small, neat chapel with a towering steeple. The simplicity of the Gospel is not seen, but rather a worldly pomp and show, and not having the marks of other Gospel institutions, we cannot reasonably expect to find it in the New Testament. We might trace the picture much farther, but will barely mention that Hierarchical Government is too expensive for a "KINGDOM NOT OF THIS WORLD." The other children live on a trifle; if this is the heir, he is a rake.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE OBLIGATION OF APOSTOLIC PRACTICE.

HAVING given some reasons to show the antecedent probability of a Divine model of Church Government, with some observations on the nature of the plan, we are entitled to expect, before examining the Scripture respecting the claims of Hierarchical and Independent Church Governments, it becomes necessary to establish the obligation of the apostolic churches.

1. IF THERE BE AN APOSTOLIC MODEL, WHY NOT  
FOLLOW IT?

It cannot possibly be determined what the Bible contains, till we examine it; but if there be every reason, antecedently, to expect a Divine form of Church Government, and if it be possible to trace the practice of the apostolic churches, is there not every reason to look on this as the Divine model? It is granted that arguments antecedent to an examination, are inconclusive, if no form be pointed out from the New Testament; but if it is possible to ascertain the constitution of the apostolic churches, why should they not have their full force? Like an 0 in figures, these arguments draw all their force from their situation: standing alone, they are worth nothing; united to the approved apostolic



practice, their worth cannot be depreciated, or their force invalidated. If a Divine plan of Church Government be extremely necessary, by what authority does any man reject the apostolic plan?

## 2. THE GENERAL SENSE OF PROFESSING CHRISTIANS.

The general sense of professing Christians is on the side of the obligation of apostolic example. How ready are they to catch at every thing that looks like approving their respective systems! What abundant pains they take to detect every part of the system of their adversaries that is not apostolic! Every denomination of professing Christians goes as far as it can in company with the Apostles: it is not till they cannot follow, that they proclaim their insufficiency. Did ever any one think of the insufficiency of apostolic teaching and example, till he found them against him? Could any of the Hierarchies produce uniform apostolic practice on their side, how would they triumph!

## 3. NO PART OF SCRIPTURE USELESS.

If the apostolic churches are not a model to us, then all those numerous scriptures that are employed in describing them, or in giving them directions, are useless to us. Why is such lumber contained in the word of God? "All scripture" is said to be "given by inspiration," and "to be necessary;" but if we are not to imitate the apostolic churches, then, there are many passages in the New Testament, now, absolutely useless. Accordingly, it is very evident, how uninteresting such portions of scrip-

ture are to all who hold themselves at liberty to deviate from apostolic example. Such persons have a much more barren revelation than others.

#### 4. THE NEW TESTAMENT MODEL, THE BEST.

Either the Apostles acted by Divine direction, or by their own wisdom, in the constitution of churches. If by their own wisdom, they would undoubtedly have told us so, as they do in less important matters. But, even on this supposition, the judgment of an Apostle is entitled to more respect than to be rejected, without the most urgent reason. The private opinion of Paul, on a matter of expediency, is rather to be preferred than that of a whole general council. But if they acted by Divine command, as they undoubtedly did, the form of Church Government they instituted can never be changed, but by the same authority. And if any one form is better than another, surely, the apostolic is the best. It cannot, therefore, be a matter of indifference, whether we follow the best, or adopt a worse. If the Holy Spirit had judged it expedient to adopt a different form, at a different period, or under different circumstances, there must have been some intimation of it. Without a Divine license, we are not at liberty to alter, or infringe in the smallest degree. We may as well assume the right to change any other apostolic institution, as that of Church Government.

#### 5. NO DANGER IN IMITATING THE APOSTOLIC MODELS.

There can be no danger in the closest imitation

of the apostolic churches. Is any one sure that he does not displease God by refusing to imitate them? Between the certainty of pleasing him, on the one hand, and the possibility of displeasing him, on the other, the choice which the Christian should make is evident.

#### 6. CONSISTENCY.

No person who pleads the authority of apostolic example for the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath, or, indeed, for any other purpose, can consistently refuse it in this instance.

#### 7. ONLY A PLAN IN MODEL EXPECTED.

A plan in model, and not in systematic delineation is what we are entitled to expect. A direct and formal treatise on this subject which many persons look for, would be altogether anomalous in the New Testament. After ages are nowhere addressed but in the person, as it were, of the apostolic churches; we are not known but as members of them. Whatever is said to them is said to us. Thus, our Lord promising his continual presence with his servants in preaching and obeying the Gospel, addresses them all in every age, in the persons of the Apostles, then present: "Lo, I am with you always to the end of the world." "Where two or three of you are met, there am I, etc."\* The Apostles, also speaking of what was to come to pass

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\* Matthew xxviii. 20; xviii. 20.

in every after age, address those to whom they write as concerned, and warn them of what was to happen to us and our successors to the end of the world: "We who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (precede) them who are asleep."\* Here the Apostle addresses, in the person of the church of the Thessalonians, then existing, those Christians who shall be on the earth at the time of the second coming of our Lord. Many more examples might be given if it were necessary. Now, this being the case, that after-ages are addressed in the person of apostolic churches, how absurd it is to expect a formal treatise on Church Government! Every necessary instruction must have been given in forming the churches. How preposterous would it be for an Apostle, after he had formed a church and left it, to write a treatise to that church on the method of forming a church! All then that can be expected is an incidental account of apostolic practice. The subject cannot be formally, but indirectly, and as it were unintentionally handled. Suppose, for instance, Paul had founded a church in Edinburgh, and, after his departure, had written a letter to them to establish them in the faith, would any rational man expect a treatise on the constitution of a church, which he had already constituted? No! All we could expect would be an allusion to what he had done. Then, according to the analogy of the manner of revelation there is not room for any

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\* 1 Thes. iv. 15.



other information on Church Government than an account of apostolic practice.

#### 8. DIVINE ADMONITION TO MOSES.

“Moses was admonished to make all things according to the pattern shown him in the mount.” He was not at liberty to depart in the least from that model. Now we have a pattern for our New Testament churches, exhibited to us in those of the apostolic constitution. To this pattern we are to look for every part of our constitution and discipline. Let every man take care that he make every thing in a Gospel church after the pattern exhibited to us in the New Testament. This is the Divine model; to add to it, or take from it, will spoil the beauty and diminish the strength of the building.

#### 9. PRESUMPTUOUS TO DEPART FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT MODELS WITHOUT DIVINE AUTHORITY.

We are often called on to be followers of the Apostles, without any exception or limitation. By what authority is the formation of churches, by the Apostles, excepted from this rule? From every general command there can be no lawful exception, but what is impossible, sinful, or otherwise determined. If we are called on without reserve to follow the Apostles, the injunction extends, not merely to their conduct as men, but particularly as our examples in church affairs. If we justify a quarrelsome disposition, from the example of Paul and Barnabas, we are condemned by the Scriptures. But this quarrel is not recorded for nothing. It is

for an example to guard us against such a temper. If any one contend for the duty of celibacy from the example of Paul, his example, in this, is declared not to be binding. If any one undertake to work miracles, like the Apostles, this is impossible, without receiving the power of an Apostle. But is the imitation of the apostolic churches sinful, impossible, or otherwise determined in any part of the Scriptures? If not, is there any reason for excepting it from the general injunction? If the apostolic example is to be set aside in the constitution of churches, those who thus teach must produce Divine authority for setting it aside. A command to continue the apostolic form is always supposed unless there is a positive declaration to the contrary. If God instituted the Independent, or any other form, before any man can warrantably deviate from it, he must produce a specific license from the Scriptures.

#### 10. SOME APOSTOLIC CHURCHES MODELS TO OTHERS.

The manner of revelation forbids us to expect a direct address to after ages on the obligation of apostolic practice, yet we have what is equivalent to it. There are instances in which an older completely organized apostolic church is exhibited as a pattern to others, not so perfect. Now, if the apostolic churches are exhibited as models to others, and if some are praised or blamed for their conformity to, or disagreement from them, it is very clear that the Apostles intended that all churches, in every age, should be formed after the same model. "For

ye brethren became followers of the churches of God, which, in Judea, are in Christ Jesus.”\* “And so I ordain in all the churches.”† “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as is in all the churches of the saints.”‡ Here, the same order is intimated to exist in all the churches. But how is God the author of order and peace in all the churches of the saints if he has not ordered every thing himself? If he has left men to choose their form of Church Government, and to make laws for themselves in religious matters, could it be said he is not a God of confusion? The confusion that would exist on that supposition must be boundless and endless. To the Corinthian Church the Apostle says, “We have no such custom, neither the churches of God.”§ Here the other apostolic churches are exhibited as a model to this. “Now concerning the collections for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.”|| Here the example of the churches of Galatia is exhibited as a model to the church at Corinth. “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city as I had appointed thee.”¶ Here, we see, that setting “in order the things that are wanting” was not left to his own discretion, but he was to act in every thing as Paul had appointed. Titus had his instructions as an officer from his general. Can we pretend to any

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\* 1 Thes. ii. 14.

† 1 Cor. vii. 17.

‡ 1 Cor. xiv. 33.

§ 1 Cor. xi. 16.

|| 1 Cor. xvi. 1.

¶ Titus i. 5.

greater power? "Wherefore, I beseech you, be ye followers of me. For this cause have I sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church."\* Here, the Apostle's injunctions are universally binding on all the churches, and no one is at liberty to depart from his instructions.

#### 11. APOSTOLIC MODELS EQUAL TO THE DEMANDS OF EVERY AGE.

Is it possible for a church to exist and flourish, without observing any other laws, rules or regulations; without any other offices, or modification of offices; without any other discipline or sanction of discipline; without any other test of admission or means of preserving purity, but what are to be collected from apostolic example and the scattered information of the New Testament? If this question can be answered in the affirmative, what apology can men plead for their innovations? It is said that "no form of church government could answer for all ages, countries, and circumstances." This means, that no form of government could be given to suit the various humors of carnal men; that no form could be given, by which church and state might be united under one political system, or under every form of civil government; that the simple apostolic model, suited only to the times of the Apostles, was incapable of governing that mixed

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\* 1 Cor. iv. 16, 17.



multitude of which a church is composed, which embraces all the inhabitants of a state or nation, without regard to character. But these are the very credentials of its Divine appointment. It is eminently calculated to govern Christ's children, who like the Spartan youth, have their minds moulded to their laws ; but the apostolic form will always be found to fail, where the membership is not of the character of the apostolic churches ; nay, one impure member, if not cut off, when detected, would stop the harmonious procedure of the whole machinery, as effectually as a watch is stopped by the accidental admission of a hair. The Apostles acted in all things by divine command. The whole arrangement of the apostolic churches is therefore the establishment of Christ. Can he be pleased by a change in his ordinances ? Shall the spiritual kingdom of Christ change its appearance, its form, its ordinances, with the fluctuating opinions of the world ; the varying laws of temporal kingdoms ; or the caprices of carnal men ? "Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances as I delivered them unto you."\*

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\* 1 Cor. xi. 2.

## CHAPTER IV.

WHAT DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACH CONCERN-  
ING CHURCH GOVERNMENT?

HAVING in the preceding chapters stated some reasons to render a Divine model of Church Government probable; having shown some characteristics of that which is likely to be the scriptural model; and endeavored to establish the obligation of apostolic example; let us now proceed to inquire what the inspired volume actually teaches on this subject. Let us never forget, as a caution, when we are interpreting scripture texts, that they are the words of the HOLY SPIRIT. He that forces them, to make them countenance, or avoid discountenancing his system, is guilty of an attempt to compel the HOLY SPIRIT to speak a lie, and bear false witness. How guilty! how infamous is the wretch that employs or compels another to perjure himself to serve his interest! But how much more criminal and infamous is the man who would deliberately put a forced interpretation on the language of the TRUE and HOLY ONE! Let us attend to the plain testimony of the Divine Word, in its plain obvious acceptation. It is really the interest of the Christian, if he could allow himself to think so, to dis-

cover and embrace truth, though it should deprive him of his dearest earthly possessions.

In pleading for the divine right of any particular form of Church Government, nothing is to be admitted, but what is clearly found in the Scriptures, either precept or example. Whoever pretends to have a Divine model must produce it, without the help of conjecture, or probabilities, to complete it.

There are weighty objections against imposing names invented by men on the things of the HOLY SPIRIT. When, therefore, the name Independent, or Independents, is used for that form of Church Government instituted by the Apostles and those who now embrace it, it is not of choice, but of necessity. The followers of Christ are properly called Christians, Saints, or Brethren; and an assembly of these for the purpose of enjoying the ordinances of Christ according to his appointment is called a church. Now these words ought always to be used to denote the same objects; but it has happened that some of them have been so abused and prostituted to other significations, that it is impossible to use these plain scripture words without obscurity. The Apostles had no need to distinguish the churches of their times as they are now designated, for they were manifestly all alike.\*

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\* The word "Congregationalist" is used to designate the government which distinguishes a particular body of professing Christians. So the word "Baptist," being a contraction of the word baptized, is used in the same way, that is, to distinguish a body of professing Christians, and of necessity, rather than choice; but while the government is Congregational or Independent, it does not so much express this, as the fact that it is a baptized body.

### 1. RULE FOR SETTLING PRIVATE OFFENCES BETWEEN BRETHREN.

That the Government appointed by Christ is Independent, is obvious from the rule he gave for settling private offences among his disciples:—  
“But if thy brother shall sin against thee, go show him his fault between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he hear not, take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the church; and if he neglect to hear the church also, let him be to thee as a heathen and a publican.”\* He does not say, tell it to the Quarterly Conference, the Vestry, the Consistory, or Church Council, the Session, a Committee; or the Annual or General Conference, or Assembly, or Council; the Presbytery, the Synod, or the Eldership. But, “tell it to the church,” “if he neglects to hear the church also.” This is very plain, and cannot be misunderstood—if any thing is plain in the New Testament. If it is now in any measure obscure, it has been rendered so, not from the scripture use of the term church, but from the modern application of it. This rule of our Lord in private personal difficulties between his disciples, is a most decisive recognition of the manhood of every one of them. And not only this, it does not recognize any higher authority on earth among the followers of Christ, than the church. The church

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\* Matt. xviii. 15, 16, 17, revised version. American Bible Union.



is the last and highest appeal. But if the church is a Hierarchy, a great national body, or a consolidation of local bodies, this rule cannot be obeyed. "Tell it to the church." Had our Lord meant the officers or representatives of the church, he would have used words indicating what he meant. First, it is the offended and the offender alone; second, the offended and one or two other brethren, and the offender; and lastly, the whole church. Can any law or rule be plainer or more specific? Our Lord adds, in the verses following:—"Whatever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven." "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." This last verse is evidently local in its reference, defines and limits the bounds of the word church, and gives the Divine sanction to its decision. This is clearly an illustration of Independent Church Government. It is applicable to no other form.

## 2. USE AND APPLICATION OF THE WORD CHURCH.

With this passage before us, designed as it was for universal instruction among the disciples of Christ in every age, in which the word church can only have a local application, we start with this axiom, that Christ meant some determinate thing by the word church, and that there must be sufficient evidence in the New Testament to lead the humble, teachable inquirer, into that meaning. Our Lord meant to be understood. He spoke, therefore, intelligible language. The word used by him, translated church, is, Ekklesia, and literally

signifies an assembly of citizens called out from others. Among the Greeks, particularly the Athenians, it was used for their popular assemblies, or public meetings of the people, summoned by the chief magistrates, and in which none but citizens had a right to sit. By inherent power it may be applied to any body of men called out and assembled in one place. It never loses its ideas of calling out and assembling.

Such being the origin and use of the word, how is it applied in the New Testament? We do not inquire how it is used or applied in the third, or fourth, or tenth century; or in Europe, or America; but how is it used and applied by the Apostles? When used in the New Testament in a sacred sense as applicable to believers, it is appropriated to a body of saints, meeting in one place to enjoy the ordinances of the Gospel; or the Christian community, embracing all the saints in all localities. When disciples were made and baptized in any one place or neighborhood, they became the "Ekklesia," the church of that place; as, "the church at Jerusalem," "the church at Antioch," "the church at Ephesus," "the church at Philippi," "the church at Rome," etc. The aggregate of all the disciples—the saved—the saints of all places, is the Ekklesia, the church universal. This latter application does not in the least destroy, or invalidate the intrinsic idea conveyed by the word. All the saints in heaven and on earth, are really called out from sinners, and are to be assembled with Christ in heaven—"raised up together, and

made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ.”\* Nor does it afford any foundation for Hierarchical Church Government. Who will presume to say that one portion of the church universal has greater authority than another? Manifestly God is its only Ruler and Head. There is no other use of the word church, as applied to believers, in the New Testament. It does not occur in any place, in which it refers to a court, or assembly, or conference, or synod, or church officers, or to a number of local bodies consolidated under one human head or government.

On what principle then, of fair criticism, can such courts or assemblies of officers, having authority over a single local church, or a number of associated churches, be urged? If there be no command for it, and no example of such assembly, either representative or otherwise, how can they claim a divine warrant for their existence, or in any respect to be an authoritative part of the church of Christ? Institutions, which have not a name in Scripture have not an existence in Scripture. A church of Christ is so called, because it consists of members called out and separated from the world by the Word and Spirit of God. But if an authoritative court of church officers or representatives of several churches were so called, it would not be because they were called out of the world, but because they were called out from their brethren, to legislate for and govern them. This

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\* Eph. ii. 6.



use of the word would be very different from the other, and had our Lord instituted such a body he would have used the word "sunklesia," an assembly of nobles and senators. When the inspired writers speak of a single assembly or body of saints in any one place or neighborhood, they call it a church; when they speak of more than one body, they do not call them a church, but churches. Thus, when Paul writes to the Corinthians, he addresses "the church of God which is at Corinth;"\* but when he writes to the Galatians he addresses "the churches of Galatia;"† also, "the church which was at Jerusalem;"‡ and, "the churches of God which, in Judea, are in Christ Jesus;"§ "the church which is at Cenchrea;"|| and, "the churches of Asia."¶ We read of "the seven churches of Asia,"\*\* and of a church so small that it is composed of a single family, or, at least, able to find room for its meetings in a private dwelling;†† of others so large as to require several bishops or pastors,‡‡ yet each one, a church. The evidence is conclusive; the use of the word church in the New Testament proves, beyond the possibility of doubt, that the Government of the apostolic churches was Independent, and, therefore, it is the only divinely appointed Church Government.

A very clear corroborative argument, to show that an individual worshipping assembly of Christians

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\* 1 Cor. i. 2.

† Acts viii. 1.

|| Rom. xvi. 1. ¶ 1 Cor. xvi. 19.

†† Rom. xvi. 5; Col. iv. 15.

† Gal. i. 2; 1 Cor. xvi. 1.

‡ 1 Thes. ii. 14; Gal. i. 22.

\*\* Rev. i. 4.

‡‡ Acts xx. 17, 28; Phil. i. 1.



and not a representative body of church officers or members, or the churches of a particular district, was first called a church, is the circumstance that the place of meeting, or house of worship, was afterward called a church. And though this is not a scriptural use of the word, it shows its primitive application when the house received the name of the assembly. Just as Jewish houses of worship were called synagogues, from the assembling of the people therein. This is a most unexceptionable species of historic proof. It can never be biased and is often the surest criterion of the truth of facts.

### 3. ELECTION OF AN APOSTLE IN THE PLACE OF JUDAS.

In the history of the first Christian church in the world, as it appears in the Acts of the Apostles,\* we have a very clear and satisfactory exhibition of the Independent or Democratic principle in Church Government. It is true, Hierarchy was then impossible, except it might have been in the Apostles assuming to act for the whole church. But faithful to the command of Jesus,† they did not exercise power that belonged, inalienably, to the membership of the church. This first illustration of Independency is found in the election of an Apostle to fill the vacancy occasioned by the apostasy of Judas. In the introduction of the business we are told that the church numbered one hundred and twenty

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\* Acts i.

† Matthew xx. 25, 26.

members, male and female, some of whose names are given.\* Peter called their attention to the law of God relating to this vacancy, and defined the qualifications of an Apostle.† But who had authority to choose an Apostle? Jesus had instructed them that “where two or three are gathered together in his name, there he would be in the midst of them.”‡ What is this but the divine sanction of church action in his name; the voice of a church, (not of church rulers,) the voice of God; power conferred on the body, on a church, to execute his laws! Two of their number are found to be qualified, when, after seeking divine direction and control, the members of that church vote—exercise their inalienable right—Matthias is the man of their choice, thenceforth to be an Apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, at the very beginning of the new order of things, as soon as a church, as an organic body appears on the page of history, we are taught that its *members are equal before the Law of Christ*, and that, even admitted, apostolic authority cannot be perpetuated to prevent this equality, or, in any way, supersede it.§ Here, then is Independency established by divine authority, and Hierarchy forbidden.

#### 4. THE ELECTION OF DEACONS.

Soon after this, the church at Jerusalem received large accessions to their number from all classes

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\* Acts i. 13, 14, 15. † Acts i. 20, 21, 22. ‡ Matthew xviii. 20.

§ The qualifications of an Apostle set forth in Acts i. 21, 22, render apostolic succession impossible.

and ranks of the people, rich and poor, male and female, developing a necessity for a new class of officers, or, more properly, servants. Said the inspired twelve "to the multitude of the disciples: It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables, wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. And the saying pleased the whole multitude, and they chose Stephen, etc., whom they set before the apostles, etc."\* Here, again, is an illustration of the Independent or Democratic principle—the inherent power of the people—a divine exhibition the Independent form of Church Government.

#### 5. THE CHURCH SCATTERED BY PERSECUTION.

Immediately after the election of the seven deacons, there arose a "great persecution against the church at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the Apostles," and the Gospel was thereby carried to other places.† While the disciples were "everywhere preaching the word," and baptizing believers,‡ the great leading persecutor was converted, and baptized,§ the result of which was, that "the church, therefore, throughout Judea and Galilee, and Samaria, had peace, being built up and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the

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\* Acts vi. 2 3, 5, 6.

† Acts viii. 4. 12.

‡ Acts viii. 1, 4.

§ Acts ix, 5, 18.

consolation of the Holy Spirit, was multiplied.”\* The author has here followed the revised version of the American Bible Union. When he first read it, he thought it might have been a mistake of the printer, or that the revisors had overlooked the sense of the passage. But on careful examination, he found the new translation, the only one that could be made, in accordance with the facts. He was, therefore, inclined to yield the point, and admit that this passage, thus rendered, was favorable to a Hierarchy; that here was certainly a church, whose bounds included several districts of a country. But on further investigation, he could find no evidence to sustain this view. On the contrary, up to that period no church had been organized except at Jerusalem. The members of the church at Jerusalem were scattered abroad, but retained their connection, while they laid the foundation of other churches, in other places. They baptized converts, and when that persecution had ceased, these converts, thus initiated into the kingdom of Christ, organized churches in the several places in which they dwelt.† Paul himself, though initiated into the kingdom of Christ by baptism, did not connect himself with any church, till he came to Jerusalem, some three years after his conversion and baptism.‡ As part of this history, the return of Paul, and his admission to membership in the church at Jerusalem, is worthy of note, as an illustra-

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\* Acts ix. 31, revised version. American Bible Union.

† Gal i. 22.

‡ Acts ix. 26. Gal. i. 18.



tion of the Independent or Democratic principle, so steadily maintained in the apostolic churches. He was known in Jerusalem, by the church, as a bitter, relentless persecutor. They had heard of his conversion. He came and sought admission to their fellowship; but they were afraid of him, and would not believe that he was a disciple. He did not seek to join the Apostles—he was already an Apostle\*—but “the disciples,” the church. When he convinced the church, by the testimony of Barnabas, that he was a true disciple, “he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem;”† they received him to their fellowship. It was the act of the church. Though an Apostle and the equal of the other Apostles—in many respects their superior—he could not become a member of the church at Jerusalem, without the consent of the church. Paul afterwards became identified with the church at Antioch.‡

#### 6. THE FIRST COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM.

The history of the so called “first ecclesiastical council,” recorded in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, is supposed to favor the Hierarchical form of Church Government. Let us, therefore, examine this portion of scripture, and see if, indeed, there is any thing in it authorizing, or even suggesting this form.

Certain teachers had gone to Antioch “from Judea, who taught the brethren, and said, Except

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\* Gal. i. 17, 18, 19.

† Acts ix. 28.

‡ Acts xiii. 1.

ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." From the 24th verse it appears that if not actually sent out by the church at Jerusalem to preach the gospel, they, at least, wished it to be so understood. The church at Jerusalem, in their letter, acknowledge that they went out from them; and do not deny their being sent by them; but affirm that they had no such doctrine in charge from them.

Paul and Barnabas opposed this new doctrine. After much disputation, the church "determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain others of them, should go up to Jerusalem, to the Apostles and elders, about this question." It was not a matter that concerned the ministry merely, but the entire membership at Antioch; and that they did not submit to the teaching of their own elders and ministry, nor the ministry of those who came from Jerusalem, but appealed to inspired authority, *is the strongest evidence that they did not recognize any human authority as superior to themselves.* We have no intimation of any official body—quarterly conference, consistory, church council, session, or vestry—in this procedure, as first taking cognizance of the matter, and, being unable to decide it, that an appeal was taken to a higher court. Men were chosen, and brought or sent on their way by the church at Antioch; they were sent to do a specific work; they had no discretionary power; they were messengers, a committee, instructed to inquire of those competent to answer, "Is it a law of Christianity that the Gentiles must be circumcised,

and keep the law of Moses, in order to be saved?" Observe the relation of these two churches. The church at Antioch did not send to inquire of the church at Jerusalem. They regarded themselves as having equal authority with that body. Here is the Independency of the apostolic churches. But let us follow this committee of the church at Antioch, to Jerusalem. Do we find an ecclesiastical council, conference, synod, or other body, composed of ministers, or representatives of churches, within a certain district, holding their annual convocation? Nothing of the kind. "And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the Apostles and elders."

In the presence of the church at Jerusalem, the question was discussed by members of that church, and two of the Apostles, Peter and James. During the discussion, Paul and Barnabas, by permission of the body (v. 12), declared "what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them." This became the basis of the concluding argument by the Apostle James, and we have the result in the following words: "Then pleased it the Apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, *namely*, Judas, surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren. And they wrote *letters* by them after this manner: The Apostles, and elders, and brethren, send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles, in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia, etc. It seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send

chosen men unto you, etc. We have sent, therefore, Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well." Judas and Silas were the committee of the church at Jerusalem, to convey this answer to Antioch. Like the committee from Antioch, Judas and Silas had no discretionary power. "So, when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle."

It may be asked, was not that a council at Jerusalem? Yes. But who composed it? Was it Hierarchical, as are the Councils, Conferences, Conventions, Assemblies, Synods, Presbyteries, or Elderships of modern times? It was not a representative body. It was not composed of delegates from different churches and neighborhoods. It was composed only of the Apostles, and elders and members of the church at Jerusalem. The persons sent by the church at Antioch, were not members of it. They had been sent to ask advice; and this meeting of the Apostles, and elders, and members of the church at Jerusalem, by direction of the Holy Spirit, decided the question, and sent two of their number to carry their decree to Antioch. What the Apostles had power to do in this case, is not questioned. What they did, is a matter



of history. But the church at Jerusalem was involved in this question. Those judaizing teachers had gone out from them, and had represented them falsely. Moreover, it was evident that there were some among them, who held the same doctrine. It was necessary, therefore, that the question should be decided in the church, for themselves, as well as for the Gentile converts throughout the world. The appeal was to Inspiration. The Holy Spirit gave his decision, and henceforth the members of the church at Jerusalem, and all other disciples, must abide by that decision. This answer, the words and manner of it, and mode of communicating it, indicate most clearly that these churches were not only distinct, and Independent organizations, but were both equally dependent on inspiration; that they had no king but Christ, and no law but his word. The distinguishing features of this council are not to be found in any (nor ever can be found in any) ecclesiastical assembly of church rulers on earth. The right and duty of the Apostles to make laws, as inspired men, for the churches, or the world, gives no right to uninspired men to enact laws for a church of Christ, and there is absolutely nothing in the history of this transaction, that in the least degree favors the Hierarchical principle in Church Government. On the contrary, we are here taught, that, even in an individual church, whatever is of public concernment to a church, is not to be done in secret, by the officers alone, or a few of the members to the exclusion of the rest; but that all

the members, including the officers, are equal before the law of Christ.

#### 7. THE DISCIPLINE OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCHES.

Not only does the origin, and common and sacred use of the word by which the first Christian organizations were distinguished, viz: church, and churches, together with the facts of their history set forth in the preceding sections, prove their Independent character, but the laws and regulations given by the Apostles for their direction, put the matter beyond doubt. The whole discipline is committed to the individual church. Apostolic injunctions, which cannot be obeyed in any other than an Independent church, imply the necessity of such a church. Now of this sort are all the rules relating to the administration of discipline in the first churches. Hence Paul says to the church at Rome: "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye."\* "Now I beseech you brethren mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."† These commands can only be fulfilled by a church of the Independent order; and they indicate very clearly that the church at Rome was such at that time. The epistle to the Corinthians is addressed to "the church of God which is at Corinth;"‡ and the power of excommunication is expressly vested in the church and not in the officers: "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together,

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\* Rom. i. 7. Rom. xiv. 1.

† Rom. xvi. 17.

‡ 1 Cor. 1, 2.

and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one to Satan, etc." "Purge out the old leaven that ye may be a new lump." "Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators; yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do ye not judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."\* Here, the power to judge of the application of discipline is expressly stated to be the prerogative of the church. "*Do not ye judge them that are within?*" But in a congregation of the Hierarchical order, the power of discipline is in the board of officers, and if the congregation would presume to interfere with the action of their rulers, it would be rebellion. Nay, the whole private membership could not put away from their fellowship the drunkard, the distiller, brewer, or vender of intoxicating liquors, or even the grossest adulterer, if the board of officers would think proper to retain him. Nay more, the board of officers, sus-

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\* 1 Cor. v. chap.



tained by the voice of the entire membership, could not put away from their fellowship, *any one*, if the higher judicatory decide against their decree. Why have an appeal, if the power to revoke or sustain the decree of a lower court does not exist? Therefore, a church which cannot obey an apostolic injunction, cannot be apostolically organized.

Excommunication, the highest act of discipline, is so peculiarly the business of the whole church that Paul did not attempt it by virtue of apostolic authority, but committed it to the saints themselves, that there might be an example and model to all future ages; except, when he delivered Hymenæus and Alexander to Satan, that they might learn not to blaspheme. No one can doubt apostolic authority. But an Apostle exercising this extraordinary power does not authorize uninspired ministers or church officers to do it. Now, this power can only be exercised by a church "gathered together in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ with the power of the Lord Jesus Christ," as conferred in Matt. xviii. 18, 20. Paul directed the church at Rome, the church at Corinth, and the church of the Thessalonians,\* to exercise this power, and inasmuch as he did not exercise it in behalf of the Galatian churches, but only said, "I would they were even cut off who trouble you,"† it is a fair inference that he exercised it only where there was no church, when it was necessary for the good of the cause.

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\* 2 Thess. iii. 6, 14.

† Gal. v. 12.



Not only is the power to receive members who may be qualified, and to excommunicate the disorderly, to be exercised by the membership, but also the power to forgive and restore to fellowship the erring and fallen brethren who give evidence of repentance.\* It is evident, also, from Matt. xviii. 17-20, and from 1 Cor. vi. chap., that a church is to be, and is, the final judge and highest authority recognized on earth in all personal difficulties between its members. In these, and other instances, the instructions and commands given, necessarily imply, that the several churches to which they were addressed, were Independent; for to no other could they have been applied; in no other could they have been executed. Nor can they now be executed in any other.

It will not be a sufficient answer to this, to say that the apostolic discipline may be executed in spirit and substance, though not by those apostolically appointed. The thing must not only be done, but done as commanded. The command must not only be obeyed in its primary object, but in the appointed manner, by the divinely appointed agents. Here we have not only the thing commanded to be done, but the persons commanded to do it. We may as well say, that we need not execute apostolic discipline, as that it may be done by those not apostolically appointed. The judges are here as clearly appointed as the thing to be judged. To fulfil a law, we must not only do the thing the law requires,

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\* 2 Cor. ii. 6, 7, 8; Gal. vi. 1.

but in the manner the law directs. The law of the State directs the death of the murderer, but does not warrant any but those legally appointed to try, condemn, and execute him. The King convokes his parliament; but the senators, intent on their rural amusements, or the improvement of their estates, send their stewards. They meet; they enact laws; they send them to the King. Will he, will the constitution, recognize such legislators? And will the Lord Jesus Christ recognize the proceedings of unconstitutional bodies he has never authorized, and which have no place in his laws? Shall they be excused, who, on account of business, amusement, or indolence, neglect their duty as members of the church of Christ? They have no more right to delegate the performance of the duty of discipline, than of any other duty they owe to society, to their family, or to God. Let it never be forgotten, that the RIGHTS, DUTIES and PRIVILEGES of all saints, in their several spheres of action, are INALIENABLE. Would Christians let any one persuade them that they were to be present in heaven by representation only? It would be as easy to prove this, as that they might delegate their duties as saints and church members, to others, members or not. In all the New Testament there is not a shadow of a representative, or any other uninspired authoritative body, in, or over any church, or churches of Christ. To attend to the affairs of a church, is the privilege of all its members. It argues ingratitude, contempt, and indifference, to neglect, or transfer that privilege

to others. It is also a duty, and each member is answerable for the personal discharge of it. Every member is commissioned to attend to the affairs of his Master's kingdom in concert with his brethren. If any neglect their duty, or pretend to delegate others to represent them, they are guilty of disobedience to Christ, and indifference to his laws, interest, and honor; and to alter the constitution of his church, or to assume the right, by invasion, or to accept by delegation, to act for it, is treason and usurpation; it is to act, not only without, but contrary to, the King's command. But the very idea of transference of duty, in religious matters, is absurd. One cannot think, judge, or act for another with respect to religious things. If he can in one thing, he can in another—and who will prescribe the limit? Who can delegate another to do his repenting, praying, believing, or being baptized? If he cannot in these, how can he in any other, especially when in the whole New Testament there is not even a hint that such delegation was practiced, or even probable.

Not only is discipline and all church power committed to the individual church, but every direction, command, and exhortation is suited to such alone. There are laws sufficient in the New Testament for the government and direction of an Independent church, but not a single rule, or precept, or example, for the government of a number of churches consolidated. Not a single rule, precept, or example for an Official Board or Quarterly Conference, Vestry, Session, Church Council, Consis-



tory ; a Classis, Presbytery, Eldership, Synod, Conference, Assembly, Convention,—General, Annual, or otherwise—is to be found in the New Testament. All its church rules and examples are applicable to individual congregations only. Such churches have either precept or example for every case that can possibly occur within their jurisdiction. They are not obliged to proceed a single step on doubtful ground. Thus the epistles to the several churches are addressed to individual churches, and speak uniformly, either of individual duties, or reciprocal duties of church members, and of the duties of the elders to the flock, and of the flock to the elders. Now if there were, or were to be, national churches, with the bodies that pertain to them, is it not strange that we have no rules for their government or procedure ; that neither elders or other members have direction as to their relation to them ? The individual flock is called on to obey their pastors, but never is either flock or shepherd commanded to obey a superior assembly of any kind nor one shepherd to obey another as a “superior in office.”\* The Apostles frequently and earnestly inculcate love among church members, and warn them against schism and division. Not a word, however, do they say as to the duty of union among several churches under the same government, or earthly head, nor the sin of one church separating from another. This is plain proof that they were

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\* See The Book of Common Prayer, Methodist Episcopal Discipline, United Brethren Discipline, and Evangelical Association's Discipline.



not then externally joined. What Paul says in 1 Cor. i. 10, has reference, and can only be applicable to members of an individual church going into cabals and parties in the same church. It has no reference to one church separating from another, or to an individual withdrawing from one church and joining another. On the contrary, this is not only not condemned here, but in no other part of God's word; but when such separation takes place, for valid scriptural reasons, it is of incalculable advantage to individuals, to churches, and communities. We cannot apply justly, to consolidated churches, that which is addressed only to an individual church. Either the Scriptures are lame in their silence, or such consolidated churches or Hierarchies are unscriptural.

#### 8. APOSTOLIC HINTS.

There are various other hints which will occur to the reader, who is accustomed to mine into the Word of God, and weigh each particle as more precious than gold. Truth is ever consistent, and that opinion which does not gain strength from a progressive acquaintance with the Scriptures, is not likely to be a scripture truth. That hypothesis that forbids a minute attention to the most casual and indirect circumstance, divinely recorded, cannot be well founded. Thus in 2 Cor. iii. 1, the Apostle reasons that he did not, like others, need commendatory letters either to, or from, the church at Corinth. Now the manner of the Apostle's speaking would have been improper, if the church

at Corinth had been under a session, church council, or other Hierarchical body. He speaks of commendatory letters as being necessary to some, as coming from a church, but not to him. In Hierarchies, such letters to ministers come from the particular ruling body of which they are members, as from the Conference, Synod, Presbytery, etc., and in the case of a private member, from the Church Council, Session, Vestry, or the minister in charge. But when Apollos was disposed to go into Achaia he received commendatory letters from "the brethren" at Ephesus "to the disciples."

The whole strain of the letters of Paul to the churches, shows them to have been Independent. He uniformly addresses, praises, or blames the church itself, and never a church council, session, or official board of any sort, large or small. In 1 Cor. v. and xi. chapters, he blames the whole membership of that church, with respect to the incestuous person, and their irregularities in eating Lord's supper. Had this church been under the control of a Quarterly Conference, Church Council, Session, or Vestry, the membership could not have been blamed; for they would have had no authority, in that case, to put away such wicked person. The authority rests with the governing power, and that, the Apostle would have blamed. If improper persons are admitted to membership and communion in a church, in which all the power of receiving members is in the hands of the officers, what member blames himself for it? If he disapproves of it, he exclaims against the officers. He bears none of

the responsibility. In like manner, when our Lord addressed the seven churches of Asia in the Book of Revelation, he praised or blamed them individually. He did not censure one for the errors of another, though, with great severity, he reprimanded each church for the errors of even a part of itself. He charged the whole church as guilty in retaining an erroneous or profligate member.

If these churches had been consolidated as a Hierarchy, they would all have been chargeable with the faults and defects of each, as much as a whole individual church is chargeable with the errors of one of its members. Neither did he call on one church to reform another, but each to reform itself. Therefore these churches were Independent.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE ORDER OF LAY-RULING ELDERS IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH. (LUTHERAN, ETC.)

SAYS Dr. Miller: "Presbyterianism is a term which primarily refers to the form of Church Government. That is a Presbyterian church, in which the Presbytery is the radical and leading judicatory: in which teaching and ruling presbyters or elders have committed to them the watch-care of the whole flock; in which all the ministers of the word and sacraments are equal; in which ruling elders, as the representatives of the people, form part of all ecclesiastical assemblies, and partake in all authoritative acts, equally with the teaching elders; and in which, by a series of judicatories, rising one above the other, each church is under the watchcare of its appropriate judicatory, and the whole body, (*national, he means,*) by a system of review and control, is bound together as one homogeneous community." "In the Presbyterian church, the government and discipline of each congregation is committed to a bench of elders, consisting of eight or ten of the most pious, enlightened, wise, prudent, and grave members of the church. They constitute, with their pastor at their head, a judicial body, who maintain



an official inspection over the members of the church, and deliberately sit in judgment on all those delicate, and yet momentous cases, which are connected with receiving, admonishing, rebuking, suspending, excommunicating, and dismissing the members of the flock, committed to their care.”\*

In quoting thus largely from Dr. Miller, Presbyterians are permitted to speak for themselves. But do these “ecclesiastical assemblies”—Presbyteries, Synods, and General Assemblies†—hold their meetings simply as “judicatories?” Are their “authoritative acts” only those of “review and control?” Are they not also legislative bodies? Says the “Confession of Faith:” “It belongeth unto Synods and Councils ministerially to determine controversies of faith and conscience; to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God, and government of his church.” Dr. Miller makes their acts “authoritative.” The Presbyterian Board of Publication publish and recommend to every minister and elder a work entitled “A collection of the Acts, Deliverances, and Testimonies of the Supreme Judicatory of the Presbyterian church, from its origin in America to the present time, with notes and documents, explanatory and historical: constituting a complete illustration of her polity, faith, and history. By the Rev. Samuel Baird, 8vo., etc.

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\* Miller on Presbyterianism and Baptism, pp. 8, 9, 59. Presbyterian Board of Publication.

† Also Church Councils, Consistories, Classes, Synods, local and general, of the Lutheran and Reformed churches.

This work contains a full exhibition of all that the church has, either by precedent or act, decided, upon the principles of her faith and order, and the rules of her discipline," etc.\* Thus we are left without doubt; the Presbyterian judicatories are (the highest at least) legislative in their character.

The passage of scripture regarded as establishing the orders of preaching or teaching elders, and ruling or lay Elders, is 1 Tim. v. 17: "Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labour in word and doctrine." It is said, "Here we find a class of elders distinctly spoken of, who 'ruled well,' but did not labor in word and doctrine."† Here, then, according to Presbyterian interpretation, is an evident distinction between Teaching and Ruling Elders. There are elders to teach, and elders to rule. Let us examine this interpretation.

#### I. CHURCH RULERS NOT LEGISLATORS.

Allowing the Presbyterian explanation of this text, in its utmost latitude, what does it make? Granting that there should be a body of lay elders to join with the preaching elders in ruling the church, does this authorize them to legislate, to pass "*acts*," make laws, rules, and regulations for a congregation, or a number of congregations associated? Their being church rulers does not make them church legislators. On the supposition that they are rulers,

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\* See the advertisement of the work—and the work itself.

† Miller on Presbyterianism and Baptism, p. 60.

their business would be to carry the laws of Christ into effect, not to make laws.

Neither would this give any countenance to a Session, exclusively judging of the application of discipline, and engrossing the whole power of the church into their own hands. Whether the elders of a congregation be all pastors, or some ruling, and others teaching elders, to neither would belong the sole right of judging, when the laws of Christ were to be applied. If a member is accused, the whole church would judge of the case, according to the laws of Christ: and if found guilty, the business of the church rulers would be to execute the law of Christ, which the church has judged applicable. But these elders, as part of the "Supreme Judicatory," not only make laws, but are judge, jury, and executive; the most tyrannical procedure conceivable. In their "*authoritative acts of review and control*," the brethren, the people, are not consulted. They may lodge complaint against an offender, and appear as witnesses, that is all; and if any one, not an elder, is accused and arraigned, he cannot be tried by a jury of his peers. It is very clear, according to their own interpretation of this text, that there is no foundation for the legislative, or exclusive judicial authority of the elders, either as a church session, or higher court.

## 2. IF RULERS, THEN THEY ARE THE PASTORS.

Allowing from this text an order of ruling elders, distinct from teaching elders, it gives no countenance to a body of what are called "lay elders;"

that is, men not invested with the pastoral office. Such ruling elders would be as really pastors, bishops, ministers, etc., as the preaching elders. The office of a preaching elder would not be superior to that of a ruling elder. The ruling elder would be pastor of the church, invested with the pastoral character, as fully as the preaching elder. The only legitimate conclusion that could be drawn from this interpretation is, that in every church there should be two orders of ministers, the one for ruling, the other for preaching: and that neither of these have the right to interfere in the department of the other. The preaching elder is not to rule, any more than the ruling elder is to preach. The preaching elder should not preside in the Session: nay, he should have no seat in it, any more than the ruling elder should have a seat in the pulpit.

Moreover, from this interpretation, the higher judicatories—Presbyteries, Synods, and General Assemblies—should be composed of ruling elders, and no others. All, then, that can be fairly inferred from this interpretation is, that in the pastoral office, there are two distinct departments, which should not interfere with each other; that those appointed to preach, should preach; and those appointed to rule, should rule; which, instead of serving the Presbyterian system, would overthrow it from the foundation. If we should allow that there is, in this text, an order of ruling elders, distinct from preaching elders, such ruling elders would be pastors, or bishops, and nothing like the elders of a Presbyterian church. Nay, the ruling elders would



be more eminently, if not exclusively, the bishops, or overseers. Oversight belongs rather to the ruler, than to the preacher.

3. CAN TWO ORDERS, SO DIFFERENT, AS PREACHING AND RULING ELDERS, BE CALLED BY THE SAME NAME?

Is it possible that two orders so different as that of ministers and ruling elders, should be called invariably in the New Testament by the same name? Is this like the perspicuity of the word of God? Is it probable that when the New Testament writers employ so many words to denote the same office: as bishop, elder, pastor, etc., they could not afford a distinct name for the office of lay or ruling elder, if it was apostolic? Is this agreeable to the use of any language on any subject? Especially is it agreeable to the genius of the philosophic language of Greece, where every shade of difference in idea is marked by a different word, expressive of it? The English reader of the most common understanding must see, that is impossible for the Greek word "presbuteros," to denote two so widely different officers from the use of our own word elder. The Greek word "presbuteros" is exactly translated by our word elder, and in the estimation of Presbyterians, must include both preaching and lay elder; yet to avoid confusion they use this word elder exclusively to designate the ruling or lay elders. What Presbyterian speaks promiscuously of ministers and elders by the common name of elder? Or who would understand him if he did? Yet such undefined, indeterminate

language they do not scruple to put into the mouth of the Holy Spirit. If ever they call their minister elder, they must, to prevent obscurity, prefix the word "*lay*," or "*ruling*" to it, when they do not mean the ministry. Now if we cannot talk in plain English of Presbyterian ministers and elders by the same name, is it possible that the New Testament should be guilty of the same obscurity?

#### 4. CAN THEIR QUALIFICATIONS BE INCLUDED IN THE SAME DESCRIPTION?

If there had been two orders so distinct as that of preaching and ruling elders, in the apostolic churches, is it possible that their offices and qualifications should be included in the same description? In describing the office of elder and his qualifications, no notice is taken of two orders, one as requiring a different kind of qualification from the other. They are called on, without exception, to "feed the flock," taking the oversight, etc., and all are required to be "*didaktikos*," "apt (or fit) to teach," which, as Dr. Campbell has observed, could hardly be the case if some of them were to have no concern in teaching. It is not said that the preaching elder must have such and such qualifications, and the ruling elder different qualifications, and each do so and so, according to their respective offices; but "the elder;" which must include every distinction of elder. See 1 Pet. v.: 1 Tim. iii. v. 14, v. 17, Tit. i.; Acts xx. 17-36. All Presbyterians hold that the words elder and bishop are used interchangeably in the New Testament, and designate

one and the same office;\* so that if there be two orders of elders, there must be three distinct orders, in every scripturally organized church. There is incontestibly an order of deacons. If it be said the ruling elder is the same as the deacon it must be proved. No man has authority to combine any two offices in one, any more than to make a new order over the rest. A scripture deacon is an officer in a church of Christ, for managing its temporal affairs and attending to the wants of its poor. He has no concern in the ruling of the church, more than the rest of the members; on the contrary as the term "diakonos" (waiting servant) signifies, he is the servant of the church. In the Presbyterian church lay elders are rulers of the church. In the higher courts they are regarded by some as the representatives of the people; by others as the representatives of their own order; it is therefore absurd to make the ruling elder and deacon one and the same office, seeing they extend the office of ruling elder so much further. If the ruling elder is the same as the deacon let him do the deacon's office only. Besides, if he be the deacon why is he called elder? Has not the father the best right to name the child? Is not the Spirit of Him who instituted the office, the best judge of the most fitting name? Especially, as the name elder was appropriated to another order in the church, why was that name chosen? If men thought they could give a more proper and decent name to this office than the Spirit of God had done

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\* Miller on Presb. and Bap., pp. 12, 17.

—which is not a very modest supposition—why did they take that which he had assigned to pastors? The elders and deacons are officers distinct in themselves, and separated in the New Testament. (Phil. i. 1.)

#### 5. ALL ELDERS WORTHY OF SUPPORT.

The verse following (18th) requires us to understand the word translated “honor,” in the 17th verse, as signifying honorable maintenance. (SUFFICIENT, OR AMPLE PASTORAL SUPPORT.) The Apostle here, in quoting from the law of Moses, respecting the ox employed in treading out the corn, and from the words of our Lord, with respect to those engaged in preaching his word, proves that all the elders are worthy of this (“*timé*”) honorable maintenance. The argument drawn from this 18th verse, goes directly to show that all those elders spoken of, are worthy of honorable maintenance. It does not, indeed, require that a church, in every situation, is to support all its laborers. Some may not need it; or a church may not be able to support more than one pastor. There is nothing to prevent it from using the labors of some who support themselves by lawful industry; but the passage undoubtedly implies that all the elders are worthy of maintenance, and if they need, and the church can give, it is their right. Do Presbyterians think it their duty to support their elders, or will any one say, that, because of their labors in the church, they are worthy of such maintenance? If not, they cannot be the elders of whom the Apostle speaks.



Besides, the 18th verse proves, incontestibly, that the elders spoken of in the 17th verse, have the same pastoral character, and are employed in the same work; all are "treaders out of the corn," and all are "laborers worthy of reward." In what manner do the ruling, or lay elders of the Presbyterian church (or any other church) "tread out the corn?" In what manner do the most conscientious of them "labor" so as to be "worthy of reward?"

Should it be said that the illustration in the 18th verse applies only to the latter part of the 17th verse, it is a sufficient answer to say, that besides the necessity of referring it to the whole verse, the texts quoted by the Apostle would not be relevant in that view. They go to prove the propriety of support in general, and not a superiority of support.

#### 6. BUT ONE ORDER OF ELDERS.

Hitherto this text has been treated as if it did create two orders of elders, and even on that supposition, that it constituted two orders of pastors in every church, and not a separate order of what are called ruling elders. But it neither proves nor admits a distinction of order among the elders spoken of; nor does any other text in the New Testament. The distinction is not between ruling elders and preaching elders; but between those who discharge the office well in general, and those who are particularly employed and distinguished for talents and labor, in that difficult, important, and

laborious branch of office, the preaching continually to public assemblies. In every perfectly organized apostolic church, there was a plurality of elders or pastors of different gifts. (See Acts xiv. 23 ; xv. 23 ; xx. 17 ; Phil. i. 1 ; Titus i.) Each of these sustained the whole pastoral office or character, and might occasionally be employed in any part of it, though usually employed in the department for which he was best fitted.

The advantages which this plurality of pastors afforded to the churches are obvious and admirable. They enjoyed a diversity of gifts ; and if any of their elders were absent, sick, or should die, or, for some time, they could not procure or support as many as were necessary, they were not without pastoral care. Churches which have not this plurality of pastors, are not aware of the disadvantages under which they labor. At the same time, it may be remarked, that churches which have a plurality of elders or pastors, do not know how to use them. They do not assign to each the peculiar work for which he is best qualified, and thus their plurality of elders is rather suited to the indolence of the laborer, than the edification of the church. This being the case, the reason of the injunction of the text is obvious, and important. All such elders "are worthy of honorable maintenance ;" those who are distinguished in their office, have a right to a double portion ; especially those who are peculiarly and usually employed in preaching. This requires peculiar, and perhaps rarer talents ; much more time, study, and expense, to qualify them for the

office; has much greater labor and fatigue; incurs more expense by frequent excursions; exposes much more to public censure and odium; and demands much more intense and constant application to furnish the mind, so as to be "a workman that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." To discharge this part of the office in a proper manner, requires a life solely devoted to it.

But do we not read, "Let the elders who rule well," etc.? Are they not to rule? The word translated "rule," is "*proestōtes*," from "*pro-istēmi*," (*to set before.*) "In Titus iii. 8, 14, it is used by Paul to represent that self-control which enables a Christian to 'maintain'\* the habit of good works." "*Proestōs*," is rather a military, than a civil officer; a commander in the field, than a president of an assembly. "*Proidros*," would be the better word for a president of an assembly. Accordingly, in the Athenian Council of 500, the seven of the Prytanes chosen by lot to preside every week, were called "*Proidroi*," and the president of the day was called "*Epistatēs*." But this is a too peaceful and inactive office to give a name to Christ's officers. They are never so called in the New Testament.

"*Proestōs*" is a word which fully expresses their arduous, dangerous, and honorable office. It signifies an officer who goes before his men, and stands in the front of the battle. He encourages them by his example, and exhortations, and leads them into

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\* "To take the lead." Revised version. American Bible Union.



action. The elder in the church of Christ, like a military officer, trains and disciplines his troops; supplies them with wholesome provisions; instructs them in the will of their King, whose laws he makes known as the rules of their conduct; and prepares them for battle by his public preaching. *The word translated "rule," in this verse, is not, therefore, to be referred to any one part of the pastoral office, but to the office in general.* That it refers to the office in general, is evident from 1 Thess. v. 12, where the same persons who are said to labor among them, and admonish them, are also called "*proisamenous*."\* It is indeed a matter of astonishment, that any one familiar with the Greek Testament should regard "*proestōtes*" as referring to an order of inferior preachers. There is not a higher word in the New Testament to denote the pastoral office. They are Christ's military officers. For this reason, in Heb. xiii, 17. Paul calls them "*égoumenois*," (*military leaders*.) But what fitness, or likeness to military leaders, is the office of lay elder? The sense of the verse may be illustrated by a simile: "Let the Kings who rule well, be accounted worthy of double honor, especially those who distinguish themselves as protectors of religious liberty." Here, "rule well," refers to the whole kingly office, and the word, "especially," distinguishes a particular department of the duty of a King. "Let virtuous and dis-

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\* Preside—take the lead—are over. Revised version. American Bible Union.



tinguished legislators be esteemed worthy of double honor, especially those who labor for the abolition of the slave trade." Who would infer from this that members of a legislative body were each confined to a particular department. Each member has the right to speak and vote on all subjects, though his time and talents may be chiefly employed on his favorite subject.

In looking at the grammatical construction of this verse we see that "*oikopiōntes*" has "*oikalōs proestōtes presbuteroi*," and not merely "*presbuteroi*," for its antecedent: "Let the *well ruling elders* be counted worthy of double honor, especially they (those *well ruling elders*) who labor in word and teaching." If a general after a victory should write to the Secretary of War: "The officers merit the highest praise, especially the general officers," he would write sense. But how ridiculous to say: "The subaltern officers merit the highest praise, especially the general officers." The interpretation of this text which makes it authority for an order of lay elders, is exactly like this latter example, and would make the text say: "Let the ruling elders be counted worthy of double honor, especially the preaching elders." "*Malista*" (especially) is properly used when a part is distinguished out of the whole; or, one out of a number. Compare this passage with 2 Tim. iv. 13, "Bring with you the cloak, and the books, especially the parchments." Here the generic word books includes the parchments as a particular kind of books he desired him to bring.

How ridiculous to have said, "Bring the cloak, especially the parchments."

Thus granting Presbyterians their own interpretation of 1 Tim. v. 17, and that it fully establishes an order of ruling or lay elders, who are not pastors, it has been conclusively shown, that even this does not give them authority to judge in all matters for the church or congregation. Even in this case, the whole church should judge, and these officers carry their decision into execution. Again, that granting the exclusive management of church affairs to these elders gives them no authority to legislate, because the whole church, or the united voice of all the churches on earth, have no right to make the slightest alteration, amendment, or addition, with respect to the laws of Christ's church. Further, that granting a distinction of order in the elders to be established by this verse, it would make two orders of pastors, and not a distinct order of ruling or lay elders. And, lastly, that a distinction of order of any kind among elders, is neither necessary, probable, nor possible from this verse, (1 Tim. v. 17,) nor indeed from any other part of the New Testament. It supposes a plurality of pastors in every perfectly organized church, who, having different gifts, should be usually employed in that department for which each is best qualified; that there should be a gradation of support according to talents, zeal, and diligence; and that the highest is due to those who are distinguished by *constant* "labor in word and doctrine." This plurality of pastors is called "the Presbytery," or

“Eldership” (1 Tim. iv. 14). The modern signification or use of these words, as consisting of a convocation of ministers and representatives (ruling elders) of the congregations of a whole district, is not known in the New Testament, nor in the first ages of Christianity.

If, therefore, God has not instituted or authorized, either by precept or example, an order of ruling elders in any of his churches, who will presume to institute such an order, perpetuate it, or assume its prerogatives; and especially, when he has forbidden it,\* and denounced, against all such assumption of authority over his people, most awful penalties?†

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\* Matt. xx. 25, 26.; xxiii. 8-11.

† 2 Thess. ii.; Rev. xxii. 18.

## CHAPTER VI.

## OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

## 1. "TOO MANY SECTS ALREADY."

It is said "there are too many sects already, and we should endeavor to unite those already formed." This is true. There are too many sects, and it is our duty to endeavor to unite Christians in all things. But how is this to be done? Is it by each party proposing to throw away a part of what they regard as the truth, and embrace a little of what they consider erroneous, that they may splice up a worldly union? Is it to be accomplished by the church rulers of different sects meeting to compare their differences, like the leaders of a great political party? Is it by such propositions as this: "I will give up so much, do you give up so much, and we will meet?" Is this the scriptural way to bring about union and lessen the number of sects? Is it not rather, for each to appeal to the Word of God, and meet on that common ground? Should not the language be: "We cannot all be right, let us then try our systems by the standard of truth, adopt whatever it recommends, and reject whatever it condemns?" Truly it is a very modest way of reasoning, that because there are so many sects already, there is no room for introducing the model



which Christ left us in the apostolic churches! When Christians are brought to feel it their duty to cease from man, and renounce every standard but the Bible, they will not be long in uniting. Every union that is attempted or effected on any other basis, is not of God, and cannot stand.

## 2. "DANGER OF SKEPTICISM."

It is said, that, "to call in question the opinions of our forefathers, and scrutinize them so severely, will excite a spirit of innovation, which will lead to skepticism." It is a very astonishing thing that the habit of searching the Word of God, relying implicitly on it, and comparing all human opinions with this standard, must lead to skepticism. As well might it be said, that a habit of trusting God will lead to distrusting him! The Scriptures, then, are to blame for commending the Bereans "for searching the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so!" If the reformers of the 16th century had been afraid of these consequences, they never would have dared to question the ancient usages of their fathers, and to have condemned them by the Word of God. Never can any hurt arise from searching the Scriptures, and a habit of being regulated by them. "To the law and to the testimony, etc."

"But may there not be extremes in this?" it is asked. Yes, but these extremes do not consist in comparing every human opinion, about Divine things, with the Word of God; in rejecting every tittle of what is contrary to this stand-

ard; and adopting the merest minutia of what is there revealed. To run into extremes here, must be to go farther than the Scriptures. While we keep on this ground, we cannot advance too far. In searching the Scriptures, on every subject, there is great need of humility, and a consciousness of our own nothingness in the sight of the Infinite God. If ever we begin the search with a desire to go beyond others, and have the honor to be more sharp-sighted than those who preceded us, we shall certainly err. The natural pride of the human heart will show itself in various ways, and it is not strange that it should sometimes lead good men into singularities. The Scriptures are plain, but it is only "the Spirit" that can "lead us into all truth." In searching the Scriptures for the mind of God, we should never neglect to ask, not formally, but earnestly and continually, for the guidance of that heavenly conductor. O, what prayer! what self-abasement! what a thirst after truth! what self-denial, are necessary in those who would advance in the knowledge of Divine things! If we depend on our own superior sagacity; if we prize not the smallest scripture truth as more precious than rubies, and are not ready to give up the dearest earthly possessions and connections, rather than part with it; if we have not simplicity of view, and a single eye to the glory of God, it will not be strange if we go astray in our search. But if we are willing to receive the truth at the greatest risk, and, conscious of our weakness, incessantly and importunately crave the direction of the Holy

Spirit, the God of truth will not suffer us to be led astray. While, therefore, we, like the noble Bereans, search the Scriptures for ourselves, let us not be high-minded, but humbly wait at the feet of Jesus, to learn wisdom from his lips.

### 3. "GOVERNING BODIES PRESERVATIVE."

It is alleged, that, "by having some governing bodies, as Conferences, Councils, Synods, etc., etc., they are better able to repress heresy, preserve purity of doctrine, and authoritatively settle disputes between individuals and congregations, etc." This objection has, in part, been anticipated in Chapter II. It may not be amiss to spend a little more time in considering it in this place. It is pertinent to ask, how have these bodies the power claimed? Is it by force, or persuasion? If it is by persuasion, then the Independents enjoy it in its utmost latitude. If it is by force, then the Gospel disclaims it; Christ abhors it; it is inconsistent with the whole letter and spirit of the Gospel. This third objection becomes more definite in saying that, "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety; that several congregations must have more wisdom than one; and that an assembly of learned men must be better qualified to transact church business, than an ignorant multitude." This reasoning might have force, if there was any thing left for the wisdom of man to do. Generally, Christians are the "weak things of the world," and, of all men living, are the least qualified for the arduous duty of legislation. But God has left no such



thing to be done by either the learned, or the unlearned. Every necessary law and direction are given, and nothing more is necessary than to judge of their application, to which the most ordinary capacity is equal, in the use of the appointed means, and under the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit. Poor, despised Christians would, indeed, be out of place in any of the so-called church judicatories. But the meanest and most ignorant, are able to judge of any case of discipline that can occur in Christ's house; for it is said, "They shall all be taught of God."\* The reasoning of Paul is conclusive on this point. He teaches that even the weaker saints in an individual, local church, are capable of judging, not merely of the spiritual matters of a church, but also of settling civil disputes of the brethren. In the sixth chap. of 1st Corinthians, we are taught that "the saints"—not the church officers, or ministers; not the rich saints, or the learned saints,—but simply "the saints, shall judge the world," and also "angels." "How much more the things of this life?" "If ye, then, have judgment of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church." We are not to suppose from this, that a church is always to select "the least esteemed" for the arbitration of civil differences. The spirit of the passage is this: Differences among brethren should be settled by arbitration of the church, and not by the world, or persons outside of the church. Some of the

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\* John vi. 45.



Corinthians had transgressed this rule by appealing to the civil law, and had thus shown that they did not regard any of their brethren fit for that business. The Apostle is excited at this, that those who were to judge wicked men and angels, as assizers with Christ in the great day, were unfit to judge in such comparatively trivial matters; and, to show that he regarded all Christians as qualified for this business, he bid them choose from among themselves, even those who were accounted the weakest. As if he had said, "To show you that they are wise in whom the Spirit of God dwells, let 'the least esteemed' brethren be singled out on any emergency, and they will wisely determine the matter." If, therefore, the weakest brethren are qualified to decide in matters of property, without appealing to the superior learning or wisdom of a Synod, Presbytery, Conference, or other official board of so-called church rulers, nay, without appealing to the civil law, much more are they qualified to judge of every thing in the discipline of a church of Jesus Christ.

4. "HIERARCHIES HAVE DONE MUCH GOOD."

It is asked, "Have not these Hierarchies done much good in the world?" Some of them have done INFINITE AND INCALCULABLE HARM. But to answer the question, let us ask another: Was it the Hierarchies that did the good claimed? Was it *because* the persons who labored in the vineyard of the Lord were in connection with a Hierarchy, that good resulted from their labors? All the real good that has been done in the world to the souls

of men, has been done by the instrumentality of the Gospel. Men "called of God" independent of, yet it may be, in connection with a Hierarchy, generally at great personal sacrifice, and with many privations have preached "Christ crucified, \* \* \* the power of God and the wisdom of God," and, "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." The declaration of the Apostle, and the evidence afforded by the history of the preaching of the Gospel, amount to absolute demonstration, that it is not the human device of Hierarchy, but the DIVINE, SIMPLE, GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF THE BLESSED GOD, to which our sin cursed earth is indebted for all the good which has been accomplished. "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world," (not the wise and learned Hierarchy,) "to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world," (not the great and mighty Hierarchy,) "to confound the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world," (not the respected Hierarchy,) "and things which are despised," (not the honored Hierarchy,) "hath God chosen, etc.; that no flesh should glory in his presence."\* The oldest Hierarchies in existence, (the Greek and Latin) after three or four centuries of gradual apostasy, have become the greatest possible curse to the world. The fact, that God has allowed them to depart so far from the truth and purity of the Gospel, from so small beginnings, from errors apparently so insignificant, ought to be a

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\* 1 Cor. i. 17-31.

solemn warning to other Hierarchies which are yet but one, two, or three centuries old. If God has thus shown, in a most unmistakable manner, his disapprobation of men legislating for him, and of men submitting to such legislation, in religious matters, by permitting such awful apostasy, what may not others fear who are in the same direction.

## CHAPTER VII.

REASONS WHY SOME ARE APT TO CONCLUDE THAT  
THERE IS NO MODEL OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT IN  
THE NEW TESTAMENT.

## 1. THEY DO NOT LOOK AFTER IT.

IF there is a government for the churches of Christ laid down in the New Testament, it may be asked, is it not singular, that all do not see it? With the same propriety it may be asked, is it not singular that all men do not see the doctrine of the Godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ, or, of the final eternal punishment of the wicked, in the Bible? So, of other doctrines.

One very prominent reason why some, perhaps most men, do not see a model of Church Government in the New Testament, is, they do not look after it. This day and age of the world presents the singular phenomena, that men are intensely interested and active in regard to every thing that pertains to the various governments of earth, under which they are to live but few years, while the various forms of Church Government under which they live, and worship, and under which they are professedly preparing for eternity, receive but little or no attention. Told by their religious teachers that God has not prescribed any form of



Church Government, and that men are at liberty to adopt any form they please; or, that God has given certain church officers or rulers power over all others in his church, and taking this for granted, they rest satisfied, and are content to endure whatever may be imposed on them, without investigation, or questioning the authority. Careless and indifferent in reference to "SOUL LIBERTY," concerning which they ought to be most intensely active! Alas, it is true, they will not, and, therefore, do not "know the truth," and are not free! The fountain is opened, and men will not drink of it; the light shines, but they stay out in the dark!

## 2. JEWISH MODEL.

The view held by many that the Jewish and Christian churches are identical, has doubtless led some to expect, in the New Testament, an intimation that the government of the Jewish is transferred to the Christian. Being too impartial and enlightened to pretend to see any thing of this nature in the New Testament, they are inclined to think, that for this reason we are left to form our own model of Church Government, as the times and circumstances may require. They do not find what they expect, and hastily conclude that nothing is to be found.

## 3. CUSTOM OR HABIT OF THOUGHT.

Many inquirers have been all their lives so accustomed to the multifarious, and complicated systems of the great national establishments, that

when they go to the New Testament, they are led to overlook the simple apostolic plan. Their minds are so filled with these intricate and punctilious systems, and are so habituated to the voluminous "canons," "laws," "rules," "digests," "confessions of faith," "books of discipline," creeds, etc., etc., which the Hierarchies have set forth, that the inspired directions appear altogether defective, obscure, and inadequate. They look into the New Testament, and they can find neither the Church of England, nor the Church of Scotland, nor the Protestant Episcopal church, nor the Presbyterian church, nor the Methodist Episcopal church, nor the Lutheran church, nor indeed any other, formed after the same model; they conclude, therefore, that there is no form of Church Government revealed, or at most, it is only coarsely blocked out, to be variously formed or shaped according to the different humors of succeeding ages.

#### 4. A SYSTEMATIC PLAN EXPECTED.

Another thing which tends to hide the scripture model from some inquirers, is their expectation of a systematic plan, or formal treatise on the subject. They look for a scheme in detail, as exhibited in the "Book of Common Prayer of the Protestant Episcopal church," or the "Westminster Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian church," or the "Book of Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal church." When they look into the New Testament for such a plan, there is nothing like it to be found; the half of the whole Epistles would scarcely con-

tain such a system. The conclusion then is, that no form of Church Government is revealed. But on what do they found their expectation of a system or formal treatise on Church Government? Is there, in the whole range of the New Testament, any thing like a system on any subject? Is there any doctrine or precept drawn out systematically? Take, for instance, the doctrine of the atonement; we do not find all the texts that illustrate this doctrine collected into a system, but scattered from the beginning to the end of revelation. In the same manner, doctrine and precept are not kept distinct, but intentionally intermingled, as it were to prevent daring men from separating them, and setting up the one in opposition to the other. Indeed the manner of the revelation of Divine truth seems everywhere calculated and intended to excite to industry, and overcome our natural love of ease. While on the one hand the great truths of revelation are so plain that a man may "run and read," being found on every page, so that "the wayfaring man, though a fool cannot err therein;" on the other, it is so wisely regulated to spur us to exertion, that to exhibit completely in all its bearings and features, and effectually prove any one point, it is necessary to turn over and over, search every page, compare spiritual things with spiritual, and examine the same doctrine, in the different connections and views in which it is found in the Scriptures. In one text a doctrine is taught perhaps with all its essential parts, but with some of its features more marked and prominent than



others, according to the purpose the Holy Spirit meant to serve on that occasion. In another, the same truth is brought forward in a different light, to serve a different purpose, with the features that were less prominent in the other, now more marked and distinct. Like a painter who would exhibit the same scene in a multiplicity of views—alternately bringing forward, and putting into the background, the different objects he desires to represent—in one representation, we have a palace as the chief object of attention, and its owner and family walking at some distance, are seen indistinctly. In another, the owner, if a person of note, is represented as the chief object, and the palace is put into the shade. In another, if the painter intends to show us, principally, some surprising and romantic scenery, both the palace and its owner will be put into the background. Now, that we may form clear and distinct ideas of the master, the palace and the scenery, we must view all three pictures alternately, though all three are represented in every one of them. Just so it is in the Scriptures. Its truths are so scattered, and variously represented, on such various occasions, for so many distinct purposes, that we cannot have a complete view of them without examining the whole Bible. They are so interwoven, and have such a connection and mutual dependence on each other, that a knowledge of one truth cannot be fully obtained without a general acquaintance with all the rest. How absurd then to expect a system or formal treatise on Church Government



in the New Testament. It is not God's ordinary method of communicating his plans and purposes.

#### 5. A MODEL GIVEN INDIRECTLY.

Some are led to think there is no complete model of Church Government intended to be given in the New Testament, because all we know on this subject is given indirectly, and as it were unintentionally, and not sufficiently and fully explained. The reason why this is so, has already been hinted at. As we are nowhere known in the New Testament, but in the person of the first churches, we could not expect a direct address on the subject of Church Government. What is said to them is said to us. And as it would be absurd to expect, that an Apostle, after forming a church in a place, would in a subsequent letter give them express directions for the formation of a church, seeing this was already done in the model before them, so all we can expect is a mere narration of what was done; an indirect, and as it were, unintentional allusion to, or picture of the order established. The distinction between elders and deacons is generally admitted; yet the exact boundaries of their offices is nowhere professedly and directly treated. A standing ministry is generally granted; yet the chief proof of it must be obtained from incidental, indirect, and as it were, unintentional hints, and the example of the apostolic churches. To prove the truth of the Scriptures themselves, or any of their doctrines, we need only sufficient evidence to convince the humble inquirer. It is

by no means necessary to silence the caviler, and divest the disobedient of every pretext. But the scattered hints we have, are not at all deficient for the purposes of Church Government. They are so numerous and complete, that a church of Christ need not advance a single step but on sacred ground. If this is so, what more do we want? If inquiry is made under the influence of a worldly spirit, it will not be strange if the scripture materials appear scanty and obscure or confused. But if we ask in the spirit of the newly converted Saul of Tarsus: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" ready to perform the least as well as the greatest of his commandments, we will have no difficulty in reaching his conclusions. We should continually hang on the lips of our Master, ready, with the alacrity of an angel, to perform his pleasure, glad to discover it, though it should rob us of fame, property, or even life. Blessed be his holy name! his requirements bring out and develop, recognize and bring into exercise the highest principles of our MANHOOD, and proclaim, "ye shall know the truth and the truth will make you free." If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye will be free indeed.\*

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\* John viii. 32, 36. Revised version. American Bible Union.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## UNINSPIRED DESCRIPTION OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCHES.

1. THE GOVERNMENT INDEPENDENT OR DEMOCRATIC,  
BY JOHN LAWRENCE MOSHEIM, D.D.\*

“WHEN we look back to the commencement of the Christian church, we find its government administered jointly by the pastors and the people. But in the process of time, the scene changes, and we see these pastors affecting an air of pre-eminence and superiority, trampling upon the rights and privileges of the community and assuming to themselves a supreme authority both in civil and religious matters. This invasion of the rights of the people was at length carried to such a height, that a single man administered, or at least pretended a right to administer, the affairs of the whole church with an unlimited sway.”

“If, however, it is true that the Apostles acted by divine inspiration and in conformity with the commands of their blessed master, (and this no Christian can call in question,) then it follows, that that form of government which the primitive churches borrowed from that of Jerusalem, the first Christian assembly established by the Apostles themselves, must be esteemed as of Divine institution. \* \* \* \*

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\* Mosh. Eccl. His., McLane's translation, Introduction, vol. I p. 4. Vol. I. cent. 1, pp. 96-105.

In those early times every Christian church consisted of the *people*, their *leaders*, and the *ministers* or deacons,\* and these indeed belong essentially to every religious society. The people were, undoubtedly, the first in authority; for the Apostles showed, by their own example, that nothing of moment was to be carried on or determined without the consent of the assembly,† and such a method was both prudent and necessary in those critical times.

“It was therefore the assembly of the people which chose their own rulers and teachers, or received them, by a free and authoritative consent when recommended by others. The same people rejected or confirmed, by their suffrages, the laws that were proposed by their rulers to the assembly; excommunicated profligate and unworthy members of the church, restored the penitent to their forfeited privileges, passed judgment upon the different subjects of controversy and dissension that arose in their community, examined and decided the disputes which happened between the elders and deacons, and, in a word, exercised all that authority which belongs to such as are invested with the sovereign power.

“There reigned among the members of the Christian church, however distinguished they were by worldly rank and titles, not only an amiable harmony, but also a perfect equality. This appeared

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\* Mosheim evidently means, by “*leaders*,” the pastors, and by “*ministers*,” servants or *deacons*.

† “Acts i. 15-26; xv. 3-6; xxi. 22.”



by the *feasts of charity*, in which all were indiscriminately assembled; by the names of *brethren* and *sisters*, with which they mutually saluted each other; and by several circumstances of a like nature. Nor, in this first century, was the distinction made between Christians of a more or less perfect order, which took place afterward. Whoever acknowledged Christ as the Saviour of mankind, and made a solemn profession of confidence in him, was immediately baptized and received into the church. But in process of time, when the church began to flourish and its members to increase, it was thought prudent and necessary to divide Christians into two orders, distinguished by the names of *believers* and *catechumens*. The former were those, who had been solemnly admitted into the church by baptism, and in consequence thereof, were instructed in all the mysteries of religion, had access to all the parts of Divine worship, and were authorized to vote in the ecclesiastical assemblies. The latter were such, as had not yet been dedicated to God and CHRIST by baptism, and were, therefore, admitted neither to the public prayers, nor to the holy communion nor to the ecclesiastical assemblies.\*

“The rulers of the church were called either *presbyters*, or *bishops*, which two titles are, in the New Testament, undoubtedly applied to the same order of men. These were persons of eminent gravity, and such as had distinguished themselves by their superior sanctity or merit. Their particu-

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\* This was close communion indeed.

lar functions were not always the same; for while some of them confined their labors to the instruction of the people, others contributed in different ways to the edification of the church. Hence the distinction between *teaching* and *ruling presbyters* has been adopted by certain learned men. But, if ever this distinction existed, which I neither affirm or deny, it certainly did not continue long; since it is manifest, that ST. PAUL requires that all bishops or presbyters be qualified and ready to teach and instruct.

“The church was, undoubtedly, provided from the beginning with inferior ministers or *deacons*. No society can be without its servants, and still less such societies as those of the first Christians were. And it appears not only probable but evident that the *young men*, who carried away the dead bodies of ANANIAS and SAPPHIRA were the subordinate ministers or deacons of the church at Jerusalem, who attended the Apostles to execute their orders. These first deacons of the church, being from among the Jews who were born in *Palestine*, were suspected by the foreign Jews of partiality in distributing the offerings which were presented for the support of the poor. To remedy, therefore, this disorder, seven other deacons were chosen by order of the Apostles, and employed in the service of that part of the church of Jerusalem which was composed of the foreign Jews converted to Christianity. Of these new ministers, six were foreigners, as appears by their names; the seventh was chosen out of the Proselytes, of whom there

were a certain number among the first Christians at Jerusalem, to whom it was reasonable, that some regard should be shown, in the election of deacons, as well as to foreign Jews. All the other Christian churches followed the example of that of Jerusalem in whatever related to the choice and office of deacons. Some, particularly the eastern churches, elected *deaconesses*, and chose, for that purpose, matrons or widows of eminent sanctity, who also ministered to the necessities of the poor, and performed several other offices that tended to the maintenance of order and decency in the church.

“Such was the constitution of the Christian church in its infancy, when its assemblies were neither numerous nor splendid. Three or four presbyters, men of remarkable piety and wisdom, ruled these small congregations in perfect harmony, nor did they stand in need of any president or superior to maintain concord and order where no dissensions were known. But the number of the presbyters and deacons increasing with that of the churches, and the sacred work of the ministry growing more painful and weighty, by a number of additional duties, these new circumstances required new regulations. It was then judged necessary, that one man of distinguished gravity and wisdom should preside in the counsel of presbyters, in order to distribute among his colleagues their several tasks and to be a centre of union to the whole society. This person was first styled the *angel* (Rev. ii. 3.) of the church to which he belonged, but was afterwards distinguished by the name of



*bishop*, or inspector; a name borrowed from the Greek language, and expressing the principal part of the episcopal function, which was to inspect into, and superintend the affairs of the church. It is highly probable that the church at Jerusalem, grown considerably numerous, and deprived of the ministry of the Apostles, who were gone to instruct the other nations, was the first who chose a president or bishop. And it is no less probable that the other churches followed by degrees such a respectable example.

“Let none, however confound the bishops of this primitive and golden period of the church with those of whom we read in the following ages. For, though they were both distinguished by the same name, yet they differed extremely, and that in many respects. A bishop, during the first and second century, was a person who had the care of one Christian assembly, which, at that time, was, generally speaking, small enough to be contained in a private house. In this assembly he acted not so much with the authority of a *master*, as with the zeal and diligence of a faithful *servant*. He instructed the people, performed the several parts of Divine worship, attended the sick, and inspected into the circumstances and supplies of the poor. He charged, indeed, the presbyters with the performance of those duties and services, which the multiplicity of his engagements rendered it impossible for him to fulfil; but had not the power to decide or enact any thing without the consent of the presbyters and people. And though the episco-



pal office was both laborious and singularly dangerous, yet its revenues were extremely small, since the church had no certain income, but depended on the gifts or *oblations* of the multitude, which were no doubt inconsiderable, and were moreover to be divided between the bishops, presbyters, deacons, and poor.

“The churches, in those early times, were entirely independent; none of them subject to any foreign jurisdiction, but each one governed by its own rules, and its own laws. For though the churches founded by the Apostles, had this particular deference shown them, that they were consulted in difficult and doubtful cases, yet they had no juridical authority, no sort of supremacy over the others, nor the least right to enact laws for them. Nothing, on the contrary, is more evident than the perfect equality that reigned among the primitive churches; nor does there even appear, in this first century, the smallest trace of that association of provincial churches, from which *Councils* and *Metropolitans* derive their origin. It was only in the second century, that the custom of holding Councils commenced in *Greece*, from whence it soon spread through the other provinces.”

2. MEMBERSHIP VOLUNTARY.—BY JOHN LAWRENCE  
MOSHEIM, D.D.

“In the earliest times of the church, all who professed firmly to believe that JESUS was the only Redeemer of the world, and who, in consequence of this profession, promised to live in a manner

conformable to the purity of his holy religion, were immediately received among the disciples of Christ. This was all the preparation for baptism then required; and a more accurate instruction in the doctrines of Christianity, was to be administered to them after their receiving the sacrament. But when Christianity had acquired more confidence, and churches rose to the true God, and his eternal Son, almost in every nation, this custom was changed for the wisest and most solid reasons. Then, none were admitted to baptism but such as had been previously instructed in the principal points of Christianity, and had also given satisfactory proofs of pious dispositions, and upright intentions. Hence arose the distinction between *catechumens*, who were in a state of probation, and under the instruction of persons appointed for that purpose, and *believers*, who were consecrated by baptism, and thus initiated into all the mysteries of the Christian faith."\* Thus, this distinguished Lutheran, in harmony with the inspired teachings and history, makes membership in the apostolic churches consist *only* of those who voluntarily professed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

### 3. MEMBERSHIP CONVERTED AND GOVERNMENT INDEPENDENT.—BY WILLIAM CARPENTER, M.A.

In the SUPPLEMENT to that great work, THE COMPREHENSIVE COMMENTARY, edited by William Jenks, D.D., containing A GUIDE TO THE STUDY OF THE

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\* Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, McLane's Translation, vol. 1, cent. 1, part II., chap. iii., p. 114

BIBLE, by William Carpenter, M.A., pp. 133, 134, is found a description of THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, which, as it is not generally accessible to the reading public, the author has taken the liberty to transcribe, and, side by side with the description given by the distinguished Mosheim, would demand for it the attention and careful consideration of every candid inquirer after truth. Every proposition in it is weighty, and will stand the test of the severest criticism. A more perfect uninspired picture of the apostolic churches, it is scarcely possible to write.

“OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

“1. Unlike the Jewish church, which embraced the whole nation, without reference to the vitality of the faith possessed by the individuals of which it was composed, the Christian church comprises only those who form part of the spiritual seed of Abraham. It predicates nothing of men as men; it knows of no rule but that of truth, of principle, of conscience. The apostolic churches were composed, either of true Christians, or those who, to human appearance, were such. They were saluted by inspired men, as ‘saints in Christ Jesus,’ as ‘partakers of precious faith,’ as ‘calling on the name of the Lord Jesus,’ as ‘holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling.’ They were addressed as ‘born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible,’ as ‘quickened together with Christ,’ as ‘saved by grace, through faith,’ as ‘the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,’ as individuals, with reference to whom,



'old things had passed away, and all things had become new.' From the first church at Jerusalem, down to the last that was formed in the provinces of the heathen world, all the apostolic communities were composed of members so designated, and whose association in church-fellowship was the result of their accredited conversion to the faith of the Lord Jesus. The Apostles and first Christians never dreamed of creating nominal territory for the display of the Christian faith. With them, the limits of the church was the boundary line of belief, and of actual holiness. Beyond this, they saw no trace of the church of Christ; nor did they dare to make themselves the agents of imposing a deception upon the unenlightened mass of mankind, by constituting whole provinces Christian, by any summary or political act. Upon a principle the most voluntary that can be conceived of, were the first churches gathered together in the name of their common Lord and Redeemer. By the force of truth, by the power of conscience, by the influence of the message of reconciliation, by the renewing power of the Holy Spirit, by the agitating considerations of an impending eternity, by the resistless workings of gratitude and love, did they give themselves first to the Lord, and then to one another, in all the endearments of mutual Christian fellowship.

"2. In speaking of THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, we speak of the collective body of believers, without reference to congregations, countries, or any other localities; and used in this enlarged sense only, is the phrase a correct one. (See Eph. v., 23-25, etc.



Col. i. 18, 24, etc.) It is too evident from the New Testament, to admit of controversy, that each organized and disciplined assembly of believers constituted a church of Christ, strictly independent of all other churches, as to its government and internal economy; though united with all others in one common bond of faith and love, and in every respect ready to promote the interests and welfare of the whole, by a reciprocal interchange of good offices. See Acts, viii. 1; v. 14; vi. 7; xi. 22; 1 Cor. i. 2; xvi. 19; Rom. xvi. 5; Col. iv. 16; Rev. i. 4, 11, 20; ii. 1, 8, etc.

“3. In the primitive churches there was a perfect equality among the members, no one having greater power or authority than another, but the whole constituting one body, in which the general authority was lodged. Speaking of the constitution of the church at Jerusalem, Mosheim observes (*Commentaries*, I., 203–210, 241, etc.): ‘The power of enacting laws, of appointing teachers and ministers, and of determining controversies, was lodged in the people at large; nor did the Apostles, although invested with Divine authority, either resolve on, or sanction any thing whatever, without the knowledge and concurrence of the general body of Christians of which the church was composed.’ See Acts xv. etc.

“4. The Christian churches were formed and maintained upon a purely voluntary principle. ‘The weapons of their warfare were not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.’ The whole apparatus of Christian propaga-

tion was spiritual: the church at large was a grand missionary institution, for the diffusion of truth and holiness. The idea of levying an involuntary contribution for the maintenance of the ministry, or for the erection of Christian temples, or for the aggrandizement of a particular sect, or for the support of a large system of ecclesiastical rule, in which the power of the civil magistrate should be thrown into the scale of the church, never entered into the heads of the inspired Apostles, save when under the Divine afflatus of that Spirit by whom they were enabled to foretell the corruptions of succeeding ages.

“5. The members of the church of Christ are rescued, in spiritual matters, from all thralldom to the doctrines and commandments of men. As, on the one hand, they are not to allow themselves to be called masters, so, on the other, they are not to call any man master, upon earth. In every thing to be believed, in every thing to be practiced, the New Testament is the all-perfect and the exclusive rule. From that inspired record, the churches of Christ are not at liberty, by any rule of the Master’s suggestion, to make their own fallible and imperfect digest, and then to require the belief, *ex animo*, (heartily,) of those who unite themselves to their fellowship. This is to substitute the rule of human doctrine for the laws of the blessed and only Potentate. To demand subscription to mere human articles, though they may rest on a scriptural basis, is to tarnish the spirituality of the Redeemer’s kingdom, and to create submission to man, rather than to God.”

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE ONLY UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD.

“THOU sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands which smote the image upon his feet of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them; and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.”

“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.” Dan. ii. 34, 35, 44.

This wonderful dream of Nebuchadnezzar and its interpretation may be summed up in this: God has decreed the existence of a Brotherhood which shall ultimately be co-extensive with the bounds of the habitable earth, and be perpetuated to limitless duration. It becomes our duty, therefore, to ascertain what it is, and where it may be found, that we may bear our part in its extension,



and share, with its favored sons, its exalted privileges and heaven appointed honors.

Every organization must have a source or origin, and a plan or form according to which it comes into existence, and is perpetuated. In other words, every society must have a head or seat of authority, and laws emanating from that head. These imply wisdom and power as essential attributes of that head, and the adaptation of these laws to the conditions, necessities, and circumstances of those for whom they are designed. Society implies persons, and organic union of persons, membership; also non-membership; according to their several conditions; and while the several conditions of the persons which make this distinction or separation necessary, exist, the one party—the membership—will be exclusive to the other—the non-membership. This exclusivism (“close communion”) cannot be avoided; and the cry which has been raised against it, is more the clamor of the partizan, than the utterance of intelligent conviction. They who cry loudest are least to be trusted. There is no position one can occupy which is not in some respects exclusive. It must be so to all who do not see fit to take it. A society cannot be formed without some terms of agreement, some articles of compact; and it is exclusive to all who do not enter into the agreement, or articles of compact. The existence of society makes it exclusive. Every government on earth is exclusive. To be a citizen of our own Republican Government is not the privilege of every individual, irrespective of charac-



ter, or qualifications. Does any one complain that a citizen of another nation cannot enjoy all the privileges of a citizen of this nation? There is not a church or society, of any kind, religious, benevolent, reformatory, literary, or scientific, that is not exclusive. If persons have the right to enter into compact, to declare terms of agreement among themselves, they have the right to be exclusive. To exclaim against it, is unphilosophic, contradicts all history, and is an attempt to overthrow what exists of necessity, what is impossible to avoid, either in this world or the world to come. It belongs to the marriage relation, to the family circle, to every department of the social fabric, to the kingdom of God, to angelic existence, to heaven itself. God is its author. It is not arbitrary, does not exist without reason; but because of the natural, mutual relation of things; because it is the natural order of things, and necessary for the good of the whole; and as long as differences exist, as long as there are differences between men, angels, and God, so long must exclusivism be part of the order of the Divine government. The Prophet Amos pertinently asks: "Can two walk together except they agree?"

To originate a body or society which is ultimately to extend over all the habitable earth, and to be perpetuated to limitless duration, requires Omniscience, Omnipotence, and Omnipresence. In laying the plan thereof, the natures, conditions, and necessities of all whom it is designed to embrace, must be foreseen, and all the requirements of these natures, conditions, and necessities, must be fully

and perfectly met and provided for. No man, or combination of men, can foresee and meet these. Hence no man, or combination of men, can originate a Universal Brotherhood. Hence the forcible significant language of the inspired penman: "cut out without hands." Human wisdom did not originate, had no share in planning it. Its origin is Divine. In this Divine origin there is unity; hence there is unity in the plan. If we find confusion or want of harmony in the several parts of a plan, it is a fair deduction, either that the head is not a unit, or has not wisdom equal to the demands of the case. The plan of this organization, so far as revealed, is in the Bible, the written word of God. This plan is a unit. Perfect harmony reigns throughout all its parts. This unity, this perfect harmony, evinces the Divine unity and wisdom of its author. In the Old Testament Scriptures, this plan is revealed prophetically; in the New Testament it is developed, and given specific form and tangibility.

At this point it may be proper to remark that the organization, whose plan, laws, and history, are mainly given in the Old Testament, sometimes called the Jewish church, composed of the circumcised natural seed of Abraham, without regard to moral character, was limited in its extent and duration, and when the design of its existence was accomplished, was done away. The proofs of this are many. Let three suffice: "The law and the prophets were until John," etc., Luke xvi: 16. "Cast out the bond woman and her son; for the son of

the bond woman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman," Gal. iv. 30. "He takes away the first, that he may establish the second," Heb. x. 9. (See also 2 Cor. iii.) God did not design that it should be universal or perpetual, and, while yet in existence, ages before its mission was complete, declared that he would in the future, at the appointed time, set up an organization which should ultimately be universal and perpetual. (See text.)

The Roman Catholic church claims to be a Universal Brotherhood. She has assumed the name Catholic in view of her extent over the whole earth, either present or prospective. She claims to have an infallible head, that head a unit. She claims to have all the essentials of a society, designed to be co-extensive with the bounds of earth, and has been, for ages, true to this principle, exerting all her mighty energies to bring the entire race into subjection to her authority. She is not, and never can be, what she claims. Her origin is human, her head, plan, and laws, are human. To say that her head is only in subordination to God will not help the matter. Two heads so vastly different as God and man would produce confusion, would be the worst condition of deformity. One of them must be superfluous. The Bible contains no record of two heads. In that book we never read of the "Great Head," as if there was a little head. It is there, simply "the head." The argument at this point is applicable to every society on earth, which has a human head, or seat of authority. No society can be a Universal Brotherhood, whose



origin, head, or seat of authority, is any other than the Triune Jehovah, and whose plan, whose laws, are not in all things—necessary to be known—God's revealed will as found in the Bible. The reason is plain: No man or combination of men can foresee the natures, conditions, and necessities, to be met, or make a system adapted to each and all. Man is neither Omniscient nor Omnipotent. Lawyer Gamaliel uttered a truth which all should heed:—"IF THIS COUNCIL OR THIS WORK BE OF MEN, IT WILL COME TO NOUGHT; BUT IF IT BE OF GOD, YE CANNOT OVERTHROW IT." Acts v. 38, 39.

Having thus briefly set forth the Divine head and plan or laws of this Brotherhood, let us ascertain some of its other essential characteristics. A Brotherhood is a union of brothers,—children of the same father,—and involves the essential manhood of each. As a race we are all in the same relative condition. By nature we are all outside of this Brotherhood: "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God;" "There is none good but one, that is God;" are facts revealed and illustrated too plainly to be denied. All therefore in this condition are disqualified for admission within its sacred boundaries; not only because such admission is incompatible, but because, while the law of the Brotherhood thus clearly and plainly reveals and exposes the condition of mankind, it as clearly and plainly prescribes the qualifications for admission to its exalted privileges, and describes the moral characteristics of those already enrolled and distinguished as members: "Ye must be born



again ;”\* “Except ye be converted and become as little children, etc. ;”† “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers ;”‡ “Ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ ;”§ “Beloved now are we the sons of God ;”|| “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people ; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light ; which in time past were not a people but are now the people of God, etc.”¶ This language is clear, and plain, and strong, and unequivocal. There can be no mistake or misunderstanding in regard to it. Thus, a membership is secured on a principle the most voluntary that can be conceived, by a process at once the most natural and simple. The individual makes application for admission ; he is examined ; if found to possess the required qualifications, he is received, in the way and manner the laws or rules of the organization direct. How natural, how simple, how voluntary, on the part of the applicant and the society.

But what does this admission involve ? What ideas do we generally attach to an initiation ? What does an initiatory ceremony imply, or express ? The ceremony of admission or initiation, however simple, whatever it may be in itself, is that of professing confidence in, attachment to, and union with the society into which the person is

\* John iii. 3-5.

‡ Gal. iii. 26-29.

† Matt. xviii. 3.

|| 1 John iii. 1, 2.

‡ 2 Cor. vi. 14.

¶ 1 Pet. ii. 9, 10. See also Eph. ii.

initiated, with a recognition of all its laws, principles, and practices, and the obligations growing out of such union. It is a representative act, involving submission to every other law or requirement of that particular society. When an individual is initiated into this great Brotherhood, by that act or ceremony, whatever it may be, he professes confidence or faith in, attachment to, and union with, and a recognition of all its principles, and all the obligations growing out of his connection with it. Belonging to it, all its principles are his, all its obligations are his, and his initiation, as a representative act, involves submission to every other law or requirement revealed for his direction.

The ceremony of initiation into this God-planned, God-originated Brotherhood, is CHRISTIAN BAPTISM. However extended the design of baptism, it is plain, that all that can be expressed or implied in an initiation ceremony, belongs intrinsically to this rite. It is only in the light of an initiatory ceremony, that our Lord's language to John the Baptist, "For thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness,"\* can be understood and explained. As if he had said, "Suffer me to be baptized, for this, as an INITIATORY ceremony, carries with it the obligation of all subsequent right doing." In this view we may understand why our Lord commanded the disciples, made out of all nations, to be baptized "*in*, or *into*, (*eis*,) the name of the Father," etc.,† why believers are said to be baptized *into* Jesus Christ,

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Matt. iii. 15.

† Matt. xxviii. 19.

and *into* his death;\* and having been baptized *into* Jesus Christ, have *put on* Christ;† why being buried and raised with him, by baptism, we should walk in newness of life;‡ why Paul was exhorted to rise and be baptized, and wash away his sins;§ why baptism is called a washing of the body, and a profession of faith;|| a figure of our salvation, and the answer of a good conscience towards God;¶ why in the whole history of its administration in the New Testament, it is found connected with repentance and immediately following faith.\*\* Here we learn why Mark summed up the gospel which Jesus commanded his disciples to preach to every creature, in the significant words, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”†† Before one joins any society he must be converted to its principles; his views and feelings must undergo a change—unless perchance he was always qualified. But (by nature) none are qualified for admission to this Brotherhood, till they are so changed as to believe its principles, love them and their author, and all the membership, and are willing to take all the obligations, and perform all the duties, involved in the relation of membership. In and by the baptism of a penitent believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, all this is professed. It is, to such, a representative act. Peter did not say: Repent and be baptized,

\* Rom. vi. 3.

† Gal. iii. 27.

‡ Rom. vi. 4.

§ Acts xxii. 16.

|| Heb. x. 22, 23.

¶ Pet. iii. 21.

\*\* Matt. iii. 6; Mark i. 5; Acts ii. 38, 41; viii. 12, 13, 27-39; x. 47; xvi. 13-15, 32-34; xviii. 8.

†† Mark xvi. 16.



take the Lord's Supper, go to meeting, pay the preacher, pray, and perform all other Christian duties. No; but, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name, etc.,"—"repent," which indicates the required qualifications, "and be baptized," this act carrying with it all other obligations of the Christian life. Why did our Lord declare that the "least in the kingdom of God is greater than John the Baptist," though he declared him to be greater than the greatest of prophets? \* Was it not because John, though a baptizer, was not baptized; and therefore not having been initiated into the kingdom of God, his privileges were less than the least of those who had been initiated by baptism. The conclusion is inevitable. This beautiful, intensely significant, yet simple act, is the initiatory rite, or ceremony, surely admitting true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, into this holy Brotherhood, and entitling them to all its heaven-born privileges. Having "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," and bound together by that strongest bond, pure, unfeigned love, one with, and in each other and their Head, their union is as inseparable, as their life is eternal. Thus this great Brotherhood is composed of all who are qualified and duly initiated according to the law, revealed by its Head and King.

But what relation do these duly initiated members sustain, to each other and their Head, and what are their duties and powers? The Word of God is complete and perfect, and we are expressly forbid-

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\* Matt. xi. 11; Luke vii. 28.



den to add to it, or take from it, on penalty of eternal severance from all its promised privileges. As therefore God has determined all things pertaining to this great organization, he has made no provision for changes, nor, therefore, for representative assemblies of his people, or any other kind, to meet annually, or more or less frequent, to make new laws, or change those he has made. If new laws were needed, or change, in any thing pertaining to the order of this Brotherhood, required, it would indicate imperfection in the Head and plan. But the Head and plan being perfect, human legislation for it would be, and is, an assumption of power, and an elevation of man to equal authority with God. It would indeed be, and is, wherever attempted, man, "sitting in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God," and claiming the authority of God.\*

In order more fully to develop the character of this Brotherhood, let us, at this place, introduce its history. When did the mission of "the stone cut out without hands" begin? When did the God of heaven set up his kingdom on earth, which is, and shall be, aggressive till all other kingdoms are destroyed, and progressive, not only till it fills the whole earth, but forever? Our Lord himself, independent of any other interpretation, has fully answered this question. He says: "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand, or properly translated, has come (*eggiken*)."<sup>†</sup> Without

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\* 2 Thess. ii. 4.

† Mark i. 15.

the shadow of a doubt, a little more than eighteen hundred years ago, in Palestine, when the Son of God became incarnate, began to gather his disciples, and was proclaimed King,\* this organization began its existence. Then, there, the God of heaven set up his kingdom, and its aggressive and progressive career began, as in this prophetic dream he revealed it. At first the number of its subjects was very small. Though expected, and heralded under deeply portentous circumstances and events;† the King himself distinguished and manifested by a most wonderful display of almighty power; by attestations of character and authority as only such a King could give; and though, by a sacrifice of infinite sufficiency, pardon and reconciliation became possible, and was offered to all the hungering, thirsty, laboring, heavy laden, lost and ruined race, but few of the mighty mass who needed his royal favor, were willing to receive him. For several years they did not exceed a thousand, and these were scattered over Palestine. Soon after the kingdom was set up, we read that one hundred and twenty persons were associated together in the city of Jerusalem.‡ This is the first organized body of which we have any account, in any way connected with this Brotherhood. But these one hundred and twenty were not all the

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\* Matt. xxi. 5; Luke xix. 38; xxiii. 2, 3. See also 1 Tim. vi. 13—16; Rev. xv. 3, and xvii. 14, which teach most clearly that Christ was then regarded, and is now, a king, as really, and literally, as he ever can be in the future.

† Matt. iii.

‡ Acts i. 15.

initiated; for Paul speaks of "more than five hundred brethren," who were witnesses of the King's most glorious victory.\* But they began to multiply. The King had commissioned his followers to go forth in his name and proclaim his kingdom, open its door, and invite the multitudes to enter. Thousands, who had before hated the King, gladly received the message, were duly initiated, and the local organization at Jerusalem, numbered above five thousand.† Soon other cities and villages were visited, the Brotherhood proclaimed, multitudes believing the good news of pardon and reconciliation to enemies, and receiving Jesus Christ as their King, were admitted to all its glorious privileges; and thus other distinct local societies came into existence, each called after the city or neighborhood in which it was located. In this way they have continued to multiply, and increase, from age to age, even down to the present time. With this brief glance at the well known history of this Brotherhood, let us proceed to its further development.

These local societies, called churches, constitute, in their extent, the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ on earth, concerning which the prophet Daniel speaks, under the symbol of the "stone cut out without hands." As a kingdom is generally divided into provinces, so each of these local churches constitutes a province in the kingdom of God. There are many "strangers and foreigners" yet outside, many enemies yet unsubdued. Every

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\* 1 Cor. xv. 6.

† Acts ii. 41; iv. 4.



convert baptized is the addition of another subject, and every new church organized, is the addition of another province, to his kingdom. As provinces of the same empire are independent of each other, having each its local officers, so these local churches are independent of each other, having each its local officers. As provinces of the same empire have one general code of laws, and are united under one Head or Ruler, so these local churches have but one code of laws, and are in an inseparable union with their Head and King. They are, therefore, in all that pertains to them as churches, all alike. This must be so for the reason already given—they have the same Head or Seat of authority; not a part of themselves, self or otherwise elevated to that position, but Jesus Christ, “HEAD OVER ALL.”\* They all have the same code of laws; not one code for one place, and a different one for another; one for the North, another for the South; one for Europe, a different one for Asia, Africa, or America; one for the rich man, another for the poor man; one for the learned, another for the unlearned; one for the white man, another for the red man, and another for the black man; one for the Jew, another for the Gentile. BUT ONE CODE, AND ONLY ONE, FOR ALL AND EACH. The same qualifications for citizenship, or membership, are required throughout the whole extent of its territory and duration. ALWAYS AND EVERYWHERE THE SAME. They have the same initiatory ceremony;† the same commemorative

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\* Eph. i. 22; iv. 15; v. 23; Col. i. 18.

† Eph. iv. 5; Rom. vi. 3, 4; Col. ii. 12.



feast, spread, not for enemies of the King or aliens, for those outside; but for those duly initiated, and otherwise qualified according to the law of the feast.\* There is no waiving of any of these laws in favor of any one locality. It is the peculiar excellence, yea, it indicates the perfection of these laws and their Divine origin, that they are perfectly adapted to every part of the habitable globe. These local churches or provinces of the kingdom of Christ must therefore be all alike. Dissimilarity would indicate departure, somewhere, from the divinely instituted order.

As individuals, the membership all sustain the same relation. God is their father—"Born of God"—they are his children, therefore brethren; their rights and their duties are therefore inalienable. All the authority given, is in each of these local churches, and that only over their own affairs. They have no power to change the Divine order in the least. They have power to receive members. "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye."† They have power to excommunicate: "Withdraw yourselves from every brother that walks disorderly," etc.‡ They have a declarative power: "Whatever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven," etc. "Whose sins ye remit they are remitted,"§ plainly referring to the effect of receiving, (or refusing to receive,) and expelling members. They can warn, reprove, and exhort each other. They have charge of their own

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\* 1 Cor. xi.

† Rom. xiv. 1.

‡ Rom. xvi. 17; 1 Cor. v. 4-13; 2 Thess. iii. 6, 10-15.

§ Matt. xviii. 18; John xx. 23.

finances, as seen in the distribution in the church at Jerusalem,\* when “they had all things common;” in the collections in other churches for the poor saints at Jerusalem;† in Paul’s instructions in regard to pastoral support,‡ and his commendations of the church at Philippi, “communicating in giving and receiving,” and “sending once and again to his necessity.”§ They have power to judge in matters of difference, either in civil or in personal offences, between brethren.|| They have power to send out from among themselves Evangelists or Missionaries.¶ They have power to choose their own officers;\*\* and, that there might be no abuse of authority, the nature and duties of these officers are distinctly and clearly defined. Two orders of officers only, are recognized in the law. These are called Bishops and Deacons. Bishops are sometimes, perhaps most frequently, called elders or pastors. In the church at Jerusalem, they had three or more elders or pastors, among whom we find James, Peter, and John, who are called pillars, and gave the right hands of fellowship to Paul and Barnabas, that they might have authority to be missionaries;†† they had, at least, seven deacons. In the church at Ephesus, they had a plurality of elders, who are also called bishops, showing that the terms “bishop” and “elder,” designated the same office. They also

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\* Acts iv. 32-35.

† 1 Cor. xvi. 1-4.

‡ 1 Cor. ix.; 1 Tim. v. 17-18.

§ Phil. iv. 10-18.

|| 1 Cor. vi.; Matt. xviii. 15-17.

¶ Acts xi. 22; xiii. 1, 2; xv. 1, 24; xvi. 2; xviii. 27.

\*\* Acts i. 26; vi. 5.

†† Gal. ii. 9.

had deacons.\* In the church at Philippi they had bishops and deacons.† These two offices are particularly described in Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus; and in his address to the elders at Ephesus,‡ the character and duties of elders are most carefully and earnestly set forth. Peter calls himself an elder, and addresses other ministers, not as inferiors, but as fellow-elders, equals with himself, before the law of Christ.§

No other orders were recognized in the apostolic churches. They had no diocesan, or suffragan bishops, archbishops, archdeacons, deans, rectors, or even reverends. They were plain elders or overseers, and deacons, whose prerogatives as generally defined were as follows:—

The elders were the preachers of the Gospel, and the teachers of the church; they initiated members by baptism; administered the Lord's supper, and set apart by imposition of hands and prayer others duly qualified to the sacred offices of elder—either for the pastoral relation, or the missionary work—and deacon. This is, by common consent, a general view of ministerial prerogatives. But with reference to preaching, and teaching, and administering baptism and the Lord's supper, it is by no means clear that these were confined to elders or bishops. Was Philip, who preached and baptized in Samaria and other cities, who also preached Christ to the eunuch, and baptized him, an elder?|| There is no

\* Acts xx. 17-30; 1 Tim. i. 3; iii. 1-13.

† Phil. i. 1.

‡ Acts xx. 17-20.

§ 1 Pet. v.

|| Acts viii.



evidence that he had any other ordination than that of deacon in the church at Jerusalem. He is called an "evangelist,"\* but this does not prove that he was an elder; it only establishes the fact that he published the good news. Was Ananias, who instructed and baptized Paul, an elder? He is only represented as a disciple with other disciples at Damascus.† Were none but elders scattered abroad during the persecution at Jerusalem, when Stephen was slain?‡ Had Stephen any other ordination than that of deacon? Did he not preach?§ With the inspired history, its precepts and examples before us, we dare not say that none but elders, regularly ordained, preached the Gospel|| and administered the rite of baptism in the times of the Apostles and first Christians; nor that, even without being baptized, a true believer shall not preach the Gospel,¶ and under some extraordinary circumstances baptize others.\*\* In regard to the Lord's supper, there is no proof in the New Testament that its administration was confined to the elders. That it was so confined can only be a matter of opinion. It seems proper that pastors should take the lead in this ordinance, as is the custom in nearly every society, claiming to be Christian. But it is equally proper and scriptural in the absence of a pastor, for a church to appoint any other brother to lead in the service; and

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\* Acts xxi. 8.      † Acts ix. 10-19.      ‡ Acts viii. 1, 4; xi. 19.

§ Acts vi. 10; vii.

|| 1 Cor. xiv. 22-31.

¶ Whoever knows any truth, has the right to proclaim it. Mark ix. 38, 39; Rev. xxii. 17.

\*\* Matt. iii. 1-6.



churches without pastors, have no more right to neglect this ordinance than they have to neglect prayer or reading the Scriptures.

The deacons, as the name (*diakonos, waiting servant*) indicates, had the care of the poor in the church of which they were members, and managed its temporal affairs under the direction of that body.

Let us quote the law which forbids every exercise of authority—for these are rather duties, and privileges, than power or authority. Christ, the King, says to the whole brotherhood, as well as to each local part and member of it, in distinction from the aristocracy and ambition of the Pharisees and Scribes, among the Jews: “Be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. Call no man your father upon the earth; for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters; for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you, shall be” (not your ruler, but) “your servant.”\*

Again, in distinction from Gentile despotism, he says: “Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister. And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.”† Thus every thing is arranged, guarded,

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\* Matt. xxiii. 8-11.

† Matt. xx. 25-27.

protected. There can be no disorder, no confusion, no assumption of power, no abuse of privileges, no aristocracy, no privileged classes, no monopolies, none to rule and domineer over others, in this Brotherhood of equals before the law of Christ. Each church, called by the name of its locality, had the care of its own affairs, without any authoritative interference from any other body, and each member his of her own duties, *inalienably*, to perform, as laid down in the law of the Brotherhood. In the Divine history of this organization, we do not read of Conferences, Assemblies, Synods, Presbyteries, Classes, Elderships, Councils, Conventions, or Associations, annual, general, or quarterly, or otherwise, to "transact business for the kingdom(!)"; to enact laws, or canons, make confessions of faith, books of discipline, constitutions or liturgies, or change them; appoint and ordain the ministry to the churches, and dissolve the relation; decide what books shall be read, and what degree of learning the ministry shall have attained, and what shall be sung; in a word, to regulate and control the worship of every locality that may have come under their assumed jurisdiction. We do not read of Sessions, Vestries, Consistories, Church Councils, Official Boards, Boards of Deacons, or other authoritative, labor-saving machines for lazy churches or Christians. There is nothing of the kind in God's word. These bodies were not instituted by the Head, or King. The Brotherhood, as set up by God, does not need them. From their nature, illustrated by their history, we reach the only possible

conclusion concerning them, that they tend to assumption of power, to tyranny and oppression, and are promotive of division, confusion, and error, and the vain-glory of man, instead of the glory of God ; that they are exhaustive of the resources of time, and money,\* and talents, and hinder and retard, instead of advance, the progress of pure Christianity in the world.

We have thus, as briefly as possible, exhibited this great Brotherhood. It is a union of brothers, children of the same Parent. Its only Head the Lord Jesus Christ. Its only law, his Word. Its membership voluntary, believers, penitent, baptized, walking orderly, having equal rights and privileges *inalienable*, and all and each accountable to their King and Head. Thus, ascertaining what it is, by a comparison, we may easily learn where it is, and our duty in relation to it.

It remains for us to consider, in conclusion, two other important and interesting characteristics. "The stone smote the image, and brake it in pieces." "This kingdom was to break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms." This language evidently sets forth the aggressive character of the kingdom of God. Jesus says: "I came not to

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\* The travelling expenses of the delegates to the General Conference of the Meth. Epis. Church, at Chicago, in May, 1868, were above fourteen thousand dollars, *paid by the people, who had no other share in the legislating of that body* ; to say nothing about the travelling expenses homeward, entertainment, stationery, printing, the time consumed, and the talent employed, etc. See reports of their session in the daily papers of that time.



send peace on earth, but a sword." As individuals, the members have a personal combat, or warfare, with sin, temptation, the world, the flesh, and the devil. As a body, it is earth's great reformer, waging a perpetual warfare against sin and error, not only by direct attack, but by holding up righteousness, as antagonistic to unrighteousness, and truth, as antagonistic to error. But this stone is "to fill the whole earth." This Brotherhood is progressive. By being aggressive, it becomes progressive. By attacking the strongholds of the enemy, they are overthrown. In conquering the vast army in opposition, it is subjected to Christ. To carry the thought further, God never designed that his people should all live in one place on earth. In Jerusalem, in the midst of their successes, when a delightful harmony prevailed among themselves, there was a leaven at work against them; persecution arose, Stephen was slain, and the church was scattered. But the wrath of man, in this, was made to praise God, and advance his kingdom. "They went everywhere preaching the Gospel." There are other ways in which God's designs are promoted. The division of churches, the division of families, the attractions and necessities of business, capital seeking investments; these are causes and influences constantly at work. Then there are those with full hearts, full of love to Jesus and the perishing multitudes of earth, whose zeal is witnessed in their pioneer efforts for the salvation of our sin-ruined race; who, with the approbation of their brethren, go forth and attack the enemy in his



strongholds ; who go to the destitute and perishing of earth, with the glad message of peace and reconciliation.

A church is local for local influence ; so a " Christian's duty lies within a series of concentrate circles." First, himself, his own eternal interests ; then his relatives, his own home circle, till the entire range of his influence is filled with devout, earnest efforts, for the salvation of those who are within its power. The King and Head having promised to be with and bless his subjects in all their efforts to advance his kingdom, put forth in accordance with his law, they must ultimately have a glorious victory. This stone is thus breaking in pieces and destroying all adverse powers ; is becoming a great mountain, and is filling the whole earth. As this is in accordance with the Word and Promise of God, every place and neighborhood, on the face of the inhabited earth, will ultimately have its local church ; every other kingdom destroyed—which must include "the children of the wicked one," "who shall suffer justice, eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power,"\* all others will be joined in eternal fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ—the Universal Brotherhood will be complete.

The great Baptist denomination, now so numerous, and increasing so rapidly in this free land, and in other lands, are the only people that ap-

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\* Revised Version of New Testament, American Bible Union, 2 Thess. i. 9.

preach, in their order, the inspired description of this great Brotherhood. The great and good Neander, of Berlin, Germany, recognizing them as realizing the fulfilment of the last promise of our Lord Jesus Christ\*—because they alone fulfil the conditions on which it is based—said: "THERE IS A FUTURE FOR YOU BAPTISTS." Look out into that future, ye faithful Baptists: it may not be far: crowding events of the present time indicate, foreshadow, important changes in the moral condition of our race. There, in the completion of this great Universal Brotherhood, you see your glorious destiny. It is your glorious future.

Dear reader, we may ponder well this word of prophecy. We may expect its fulfilment. We may not understand it all, and may die before its accomplishment, before the Brotherhood becomes universal; but let us be sure that we are in union and sympathy with its Head, sharing its privileges, and actively co-operating with its membership, each and all, doing what we can to promote its universal extension. Then the King will say: "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of thy Lord."

Weigh well these closing words: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" . . . "and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of the underworld shall not prevail against it."

"All power was given to me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore, and disciple all the nations,

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\* Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

immersing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatever I commanded you. And behold, I am with you alway, unto the end of the world."\*

The churches of the nineteenth century must be like the churches of the first century, in order to fulfil the mission appointed them by their Lord and Master.

AMEN.

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\* Math. xvi. 15, 18; xxviii. 18, 19. Revised version, Am. Bib. Union.









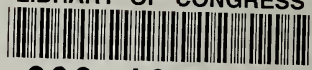








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